

# HISTORY OF THE MUSLIMS OF BENGAL

VOLUME I A  
MUSLIM RULE IN BENGAL  
(600-1170 / 1203-1757)

BY  
**MUHAMMAD MOHAR ALI**  
M.A. (Dac.), Ph.D. (London), Barrister-at-Law  
Professor of the History of Islam in South Asia, Research Centre,  
Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud Islamic University, Riyadh



**ISLAMIC FOUNDATION BANGLADESH**

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**Muhammad Mohar Ali**

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# FOREWORD

The ancient land of Bengal comprises not only present Bangladesh but also the Indian Province of West Bengal and part of Bihar in the west, Assam and Hill Tippera in the north-east and east and Orissa in the south-west. The conquest of Bengal by the Muslims under Ikhtiyar Uddin Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khilji took place in the early years of the 13th century mainly as a consequence of Muhammad Ghori's expedition in northern India. But long before the fiery hooves of Bakhtiyar's Afghan steed kicked off the Nadia dust and darkened the mid-day sun of Lakshman Sena Bangladesh had been echoing the mystic sounds of innumerable Sufi saints and seers scattering the light and learning for centuries.

Both the Muslim rulers and the missionaries carrying the intensely human messages of Islam drew an immediate emotional response from the caste-ridden, depressed local millions. Islam with its teachings of one Creator for all the universe and of equality of all men before Him must have appeared as a revolutionary force to a people who were acknowledgedly degraded and divided by iniquitous social divisions and disabilities.

It is one of the earlier documented regions of the Indian sub-continent which came under the sway of Islam. On the other hand it was also the first province of the subcontinent to fall victim to the colonial expansion of Europe. The time that lapsed between the inception of Islam and the European colonial engulfment of the land is more than five hundred years. During this period Bengal became one of the largest Muslim populated regions in the world. In that context, it is unfortunate, the history of the Muslims of Bengal did not get adequate attention as it deserves.

The treatise entitled History of the Muslim of Bengal by Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali, a renowned researcher and historian, is an excellent work that deals with the formative period of the history of the Muslims of Bengal from the very inception of Islam in the land.

The work is a meticulous and earnest effort to meet the need for a connected and comprehensive history of the Muslims of the Bengal. It deals with the history of Muslims before the establishment of British political dominion over the region. The book is such a valuable research work that it can safely be marked out as a historical and cultural encyclopedia of the Muslims of Bengal. Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali has depicted in this work the history of the people in its broad sense and also treated in detail the cultural, economic and social aspects. A treatise like this because of its distinctive appeal deserves wide attention and study at all levels not only among the student community in Bangladesh but also in every nook and corner of the Muslim world.

We express our deepest gratitude to Almighty Allah for enabling us to reprint this excellent research work. May Allah, in His infinite Mercy, accept this humble endeavour of ours. Ameen.

**Syed Asbraf Ali**  
Director General  
Islamic Foundation Bangladesh

## Publisher's Note

The treatise entitled 'History of the Muslims of Bengal' by renowned researcher and historian of the time Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali has been recognized worldwide as an excellent book of history. This book deals with not only the history of the Muslims of Bengal but also the glorious history of the advent of Islam. He has not only put down the splendid victories of the Muslim rulers, but also depicted the socio-economic and cultural developments of the land which have been deeply influenced by Islam. Islam has been spread over the vast area of Asia and Africa within the shortest span of spreading Islam in the Arab lands. The Muslim conquest of Bengal has been marked as a sequel to Muhammad Ghorī's expedition to the northern India. It can be said unhesitatingly that Islam has drifted away other religious beliefs of this part and established its own splendour. As a result, a radical change took place in the socio-political and cultural arena of the Bengali speaking part of India. The touch of Islam has given the people of this area a true path, providing good government to the country and spreading throughout in the benefits of justice, equality and stability.

The impact of Islam on the Muslims of Bengal has not been elaborately discussed before. But Prof. Dr. Mohar Ali has made the pioneering role to accomplish this job.

Though the history of Bengal was written earlier but history of the Muslims here was not recorded. He has done this noble but toilsome task. We are very much grateful to him for allowing us to publish the book. We hope that this research work will be accepted by the readers. One thousand copies of the book have been printed in offset paper for the readers of foreign countries.

May Allah, the Almighty, in His infinite Mercy accept our humble endeavour. Ameen

**Muhammad Abdur Rab**  
Director, Publication Department  
Islamic Foundation Bangladesh

consideration on the project and was of the view that such a work, if carried out, would serve the interests of Islamic history and would contribute to the enrichment of the library on Islam which falls short of a comprehensive research work on the history of the Muslims of Bengal. Hence the University approved the project and encouraged its initiator to proceed with the work by entrusting him exclusively with it. The University also provided him with the necessary academic and material facilities to enable him, with the help of Allah, to accomplish the project.

It is now a pleasure for me to present this work to those interested in Islamic history and to all the sincere well-wishers of Islam who desire for substantial research work. This is by way of the University's participation in the effort to fill the gaps in the library on Islamic history.

Such participation represents only one aspect of the University's concern, under the directives of our rightly-guided government, for the affairs of Muslims in general. This concern embraces various fields and assumes different forms such as sponsoring academic research work, like the present book, granting scholarships to Muslim students for prosecuting their studies, assisting Muslim peoples by providing them with religious scholars and guides, supplying them with useful books and advancing various other types of aid and assistance which, on the whole, demonstrate the extent of His Majesty the King's benevolence and generosity for promoting the cause of the Muslims, their progress and solidarity.

The book before us is in fact part of a rather extensive project; for, what we are now presenting is only the first part of it, dealing with the formative period of the history of the Muslims of Bengal from the inception of Islam in the land till the last quarter of the 12th century H. (middle of the 18th century A.C.). The second part of the book deals with the early phase of British rule over the land including the reform movements and resistance to the foreign domination; while the third part makes a study of the modern and recent history bringing down the narrative till the emergence of Pakistan in 1367 H. (1947 A.C.).

The book as a whole is not confined to a narration of the political history alone. It deals with the history of the people in its broad sense and treats the cultural, economic and social aspects as also the reform movements and the history of the educational developments. In its comprehensiveness the book is in fact a historical and cultural encyclopaedia of the Muslims of Bengal.

Finally, I express my thanks to the author for his commendable performance and profound research work, and pray to Allah for his success and progress. I hope the Research Centre of the University would undertake other intensive research projects that would enrich the Islamic library and would serve as reference works, like this book, not only in the field of Islamic history but also in other Islamic and Arabic disciplines and humanities.

May Allah enable us all to do whatever is good and beneficial.

*Wassalamu 'alaikum wa rahmatullahi.*

Dr. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Mohsin al-Turki  
Rector, Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ūd  
Islamic University

## PREFACE

Bengal is one of the latest lands to come into political contact with Islam. It is also one of the earliest to fall a victim to European colonial expansion in the mid-eighteenth century. Between these two events there elapsed a period of more than five hundred years during which the land turned out to be the habitat of one of the largest Muslim populations in the world. And ever since the coming of the Muslims the course of the socio-political and cultural developments of the land has been deeply influenced by Islam. The history of the Muslims of Bengal has not however hitherto received that attention which it deserves. Much research work has of course been done since the late nineteenth century; but a good deal yet remains to be done. Except for the *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* written by Ghulām Husain Salīm some two centuries ago, in 1788 A.C., no other work exists which may properly be called a connected and systematic history of the Muslims of Bengal. That work, though still valuable in many respects, is obviously out of date. The *History of Bengal* Vol. II published by the university of Dacca in 1948 of course deals with the period of Muslim rule in Bengal; but it was written from an altogether different point of view. Moreover, it totally ignores the socio-cultural aspects of the history of the Muslims. At any rate, a fairly good amount of further research has taken place since its publication which renders a reassessment of both its facts and conclusions necessary.

The present work is an humble effort to meet this need for a connected and comprehensive history of the Muslims of Bengal. It is the first of a projected three-volume work intended to bring down the narrative to present times. This first volume deals with the period of more than five hundred years prior to the establishment of British political dominion over the land. It is

divided into five parts. The first four parts deal with the four specific periods into which the political history may be divided, namely, the period of the Bengal Sultanat, that of transition to Mughal rule, the Mughal rule and the Murshidabad *Niyābat*. The fifth part is devoted to socio-cultural history. A larger space has necessarily been taken by the political history if only because, unlike socio-cultural developments which usually follow the same pattern over a considerable length of time, political developments for the same period are more varied and numerous. Moreover, an attempt has been made to discuss all the essential political and military events in some detail, and also to elucidate, as far as practicable, some doubtful or controversial points and issues. This has not been done, however, at the cost of the socio-cultural history which has been assigned about four hundred pages, forming almost one-third of the whole work.

The sources of information for this period have been indicated in the introduction. A work of this nature has necessarily to be based not only on these sources but also on the previous works and researches on the subject. I have drawn freely on them and have indicated my debt to them at the appropriate places. The present work is not, however, a mere summary of the existing knowledge in the field. I have attempted to give new facts or new interpretations in almost each chapter of the book. Even a systematic and chronological arrangement of the facts noted by others has often yielded an altogether new conclusion.

The term "Bengal" has been used in this work to denote generally the area over which the Muslims ruled. It thus comprises not only the present Bangladesh but also the Indian province of West Bengal and parts of the provinces of Bihar in the west, Assam and hill Tippera in the north-east and east, and Orissa in the south-west. I have followed the standard system of transliteration for Arabic, Persian and Bengali expressions. An attempt has been made, however, to minimise the use of diacritical marks. Well-known and easily recognizable place-names and personal names such as Dacca, Patna, Baghdad, Muhammad have been generally used without diacritical marks.

I am deeply grateful to the authorities of the Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University, Riyadh, for their having sponsored the project. Particularly I am grateful to the Rector of the university, Dr. Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-Moḥsin al-Turkī, for his keen personal interest in the work and for his having kindly provided me with all necessary facilities including leave to work in London and funds for procuring microfilm, microfiche and photo-copies of source materials. I am equally grateful to Dr. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Rubai'a, Director, Research Centre, who has been a source of constant help and who has always sympathetically considered all my requests and requisitions in connection with this project. My colleagues in the department of history and in the Research Centre have all extended to me all possible cooperation and help. My thanks are specially due to Professor Muṣṭafā Muḥammad Muṣ'ad, Professor Mitwally Mousā, Professor Sayyid Rizwan 'Alī, and Dr. Abdul Fattāḥ Hasan 'Abu 'Alich, for their constant encouragement, help and useful suggestions. My thanks are due also to Professor Aḥmad Totonji, formerly Deputy Secretary-General of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Riyadh, who rendered invaluable help in materializing the project and who has ever since helped me in various ways. I am also thankful to Professor Syed Sajjad Husain, formerly Vice-Chancellor, University of Dacca, for his constant encouragement and much valuable suggestions.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my preceptor, Professor K.A. Ballhatchet of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London who, besides taking a personal interest in the work and enlightening me with valuable comments, facilitated my stay and work in London by accepting me as a member of his seminar and according me numerous other academic facilities at the School. Without his help and cooperation it would have been very difficult on my part to accomplish the work.

In preparing the book I had to work in the Dacca University Library, the Bangladesh Secretariat Library, the Bengali Academy Library, all at Dacca, the Central Library of the Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University, the King Sa'ūd University Central

Library, both at Riyadh, and the School of Oriental and African Studies Library, the India Office (Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office) Library, the University of London (Senate House) Library, and the British (Museum) Library, all at London. Everywhere I received the very best of attention and sincere cooperation. I am grateful to the staff of these libraries and institutions. My thanks are due also to Professor Fazlur Rahman and Mr. Muhammad Hafizur Rahman for their help in reading some proofs of the book.

Riyadh,  
10 Rabi' I, 1406 H.  
(22 Nov., 1985)

Muhammad Mohar Ali

[P.S. After the final press copy of the book had been prepared, the spelling of "Dacca" was officially changed to "Dhaka". Hence the expression "Dacca" used in this book should be understood as "Dhaka".]



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A.B.O.R.I.</i>	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.</i>
<i>Āin.</i>	Abū al-Faḍl 'Allāmī, <i>Āin-i-Akbarī</i> , tr. H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett (Vols. II & III revised by J.N. Sarkar), Calcutta, 1939, 1948, 1949.
<i>Ak.</i>	Abū al-Faḍl 'Allāmī, <i>Akbarnāma</i> , ed. Aḥmad 'Alī and 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Calcutta, 1873—86, tr. H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1897, 1921.
<i>A.N.</i>	Muḥammad Kāzīm, <i>Ālamgīrnāmah</i> , ed. Maulavīs Khādim Ḥusain and 'Abd al-Ḥayy, Calcutta, 1868.
<i>A.S.I.R.</i>	<i>Archaeological Survey of India Report.</i>
<i>B.G.</i>	Mirzā Nathan, <i>Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī</i> , tr. M.I. Borah, Gauhati, 1936.
<i>B.M.P.</i>	<i>Bengal and Madras Papers</i> , 2 Vols., Imperial Record Department, Calcutta, 1928.
<i>Barānī.</i>	Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Barānī, <i>Tārīkh-i-Firūz-Shāhī</i> , ed. Sayyed Aḥmad Khān, Calcutta, 1862.
<i>Barbosa.</i>	<i>The Book of Duarte Barbosa</i> , tr. M.L. Dames, London, 1921.
<i>B.N.</i>	'Abd al-Ḥamīd Lāhawrī, <i>Bādshāh Nāma</i> , ed. Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad and 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Calcutta, 1868.
<i>B.P.P.</i>	<i>Bengal Past and Present.</i>
<i>Bibliography.</i>	A.H. Dani, <i>Bibliography of Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal</i> , Dacca, 1957.

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- E.I.M. *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*.
- F.I. Shihāb al-Dīn Tālīsh, *Fathīya-i-'Ibriya*, tr. in *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 51-96, and 1906, 257-267; 1907, 405-425.
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- Hug. Hugli Factory Records.
- I.O.L. India Office (Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office) Library, London.

<i>I.H.Q.</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly.</i>
<i>J.A.S.B.</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.</i>
<i>J.A.S.P.</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan.</i>
<i>J.B.O.R.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society.</i>
<i>J.B.R.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Bihar Research Society.</i>
<i>J.E.P.H.A.</i>	<i>Journal of the East Pakistan History Association.</i>
<i>J.I.S.O.A.</i>	<i>Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.</i>
<i>J.N.S.I.</i>	<i>Journal of the Numismatic Society of India.</i>
<i>J.P.H.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society.</i>
Kas.	Kasimbazar Factory Records.
M.A.	Muhammad Sāqī Musta'id Khān, <i>Maāthir-i-Ālamgīrī</i> , ed. Aghā Aḥmad 'Alī, Calcutta, 1873, tr. J.N. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1947.
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- III. Shāista Khān.
- IV. Murshid Qulī Khān.
- V. Shujā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Khān.
- VI. Sarfarāz Khān.
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## BENGAL AND THE NEIGHBOURING TERRITORIES

as they appear on one of the earliest maps of the region  
(from Blaeu's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*,  
Vol. II, Amsterdam, 1650, reduced one-half and reproduced  
in *J.A.S.B.*, Pt I, 1873, Pl. IV).

### Notes

Several interesting points in this map deserve notice

1. Although the map is entitled "Magni Mogoli Imperium" (The Great Mogul Empire), the only territory clearly demarcated is "Bengala" (Bengal), being shown as surrounded by the Bay of Bengal in the south and hills on the other three sides. The hills in the north, though not very accurately placed, are obviously meant to be the foot-hills of the great Hindukush, while those in the east are the later's out shoots running through Assam and those in the west are the Raptahat Hills running through the Santal Parganas and Bihar.

2. The area thus demarcated corresponds roughly with the area of Husain Shahi Bengal (see pp 206-207 and map). Indeed, not only the Santal Parganas and parts of Bihar in the west, but also parts of Assam including Kamrup, Karnti Gomouay, and Sillhet (Sroter) and Parts of Tipura (Tipora), which were included in 'Ala' al-Din Husain Shah's dominions in the east are clearly shown as within "Bengala". The town of Sillhet (Sroter) is very correctly indicated and placed to the north of "Tipora".

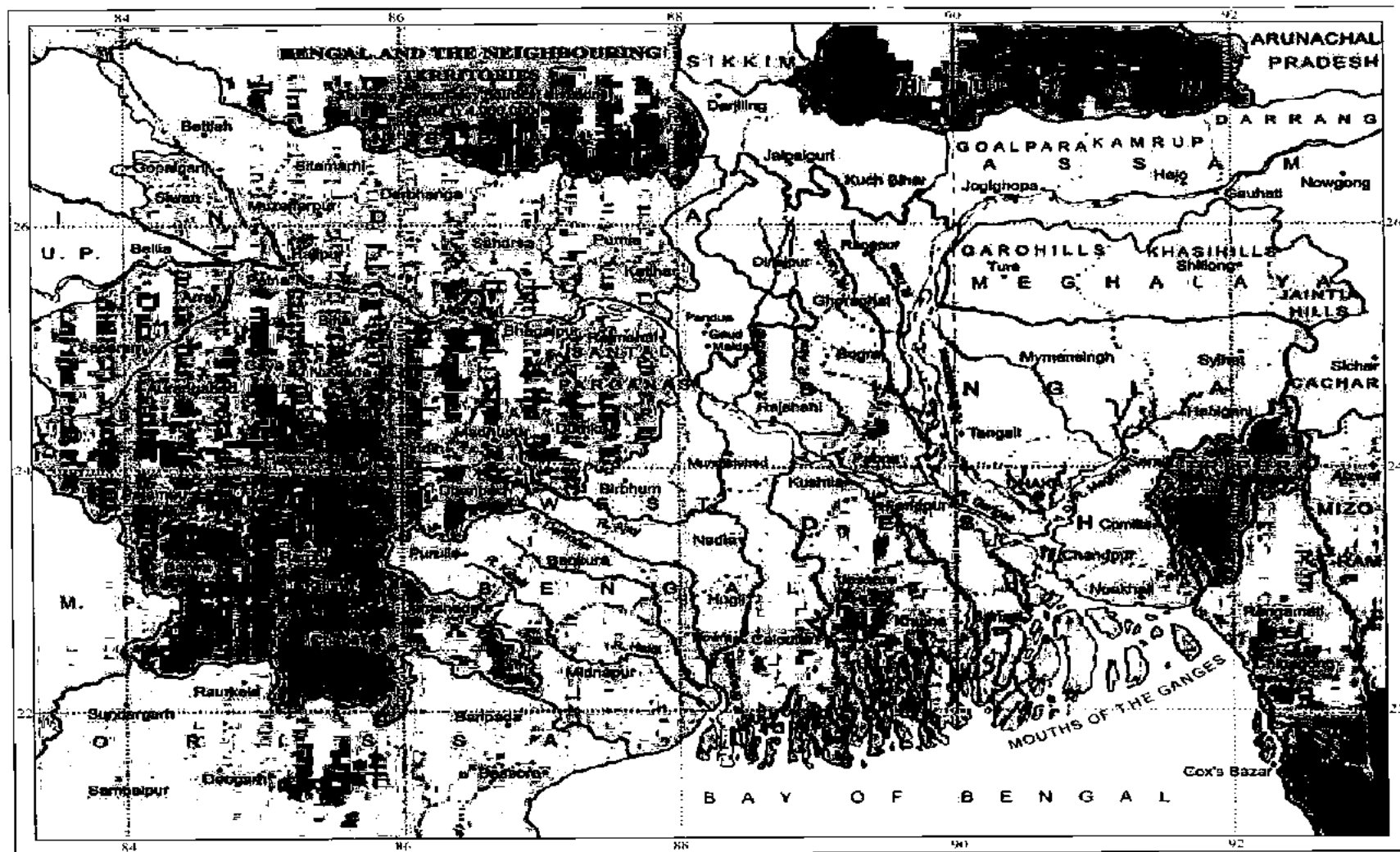
3. The city of Gaud (Gour) is correctly shown in north Bengal, with a castle and flag sign, indicating that it was the capital city. Obviously the map, though published in 1650, was drawn either much earlier when Bengal was in independent state prior to the coming of the Moghals or were based on information pertaining to that period.

4. The same conclusion is suggested by the absence of any mention of Hughli which became an important port-town in west Bengal and a rendezvous of the Portuguese, etc., in the sixteenth and early in the seventeenth centuries. It was in fact captured from them by the Moghals in 1633. On the contrary Mandarman, which was an important town in Hughli district at a much earlier period, is shown prominently. Also, a little to the north-east of Mandarman and along the river is shown Satgion, which was the principal port in the locality prior to the rise of Hughli.

5. It is equally noteworthy that the main channel of the Ganges is shown as it is today, running through eastern Bengal between the districts of Dhaka and Comilla (Tippora) on the east and Faridpur and Bansal on the west. All the important towns along this main channel including "Dacca" (Dhaka), Sonargaon and Bindar are more or less accurately shown.

6. The port-town of Chittagong (Chaugam) with a castle sign is correctly shown at the south-eastern extremity of the mouth of the Ganges and on the western bank of the river (Karnafab). Opposite Chittagong, on the eastern bank of the river, is a bigger castle with the expression "Bengala". This is perhaps reminiscent of the ancient port-town of Bengala which was most probably situated at the site shown, adjacent to the present port-town of Chittagong. (Cf. Blochmann, who not very convincingly states that Blaeu inadvertently wrote 'Bengala' at the place or the word represents 'Bungalow', meaning a particular type of dwelling house-*J.A.S.B.*, Pt I, 1873, p.233).

7. The area to the south of the river Karnafab and consisting of southern Chittagong district and the district of Hill Tracts is designated "Codoiascam", which name the Portuguese gave to the locality after Khuda Bakhsh Khan who established himself as its ruler towards the end of the Husain Shahi period.



## INTRODUCTION

### I: THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

The expression *Bangālah* is derived from the word *Banga* which was originally the name of a few south-eastern districts at the mouth of the Ganges. The name *Bangālah* (Anglicised Bengal) came to be applied to a much wider area covering the lower courses of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra during the Muslim period, particularly since the time of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh (740—759/1339—1358). Ever since this change and wider application of the name, however, the limits of Bengal have changed from time to time. In the present work it is used to denote generally the territory over which the Muslims ruled prior to the capture of political power by the British in the middle of the eighteenth century. It thus comprises not only the former British Indian province of Bengal but also parts of Bihar in the west and Assam in the east, together, at times, with strips of Orissa in the south-west. This area is situated roughly within 27° and 21° latitudes and 92½° and 87° longitudes.

The most remarkable feature of its landscape is the network of rivers formed by the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna and their numerous distributaries and affluents. In fact the alluvia of these rivers have brought the surrounding land-surface into existence. The Ganges and the Brahmaputra, originating in the Himalayas, enter Bengal respectively from the north-west and north-east, while the Meghna, originating in the Assam hills, enter it from the east. All the three rivers join their streams in east Bengal before falling into the sea and thus form a mighty and wide river below the present district of Dacca. Formerly the main channel of the Brahmaputra in Bengal ran across the Mymensingh district and met and merged with the Meghna before joining the Ganges near Chandpur (Tippera district). At present, however, the main Brahmaputra channel runs along the western borders of Mymensingh and Dacca districts and meets the Ganges near Goalando (Faridpur district). Except for this, no other remarkable changes in the courses of the great rivers in Bengal appear to be on record. At any rate, the main Ganges channel has ever flowed east-south-east after entering Bengal near Rajmahal, falling into

the sea at the point where it does at present with the districts of Noakhali and Chittagong on its eastern side and the district of Barisal on its western side. This main channel of the Ganges as well as its combined stream with the Brahmaputra and the Meghna give off, however, numerous distributaries and channels which intersect south Bengal and empty themselves into the sea. These distributaries and streams, together with the main rivers, form one of the most remarkable networks of rivers in the world. There have of course been changes in the courses of these distributaries, specially those of the combined stream that fall to the sea through the south-eastern districts of Faridpur and Barisal. The westernmost distributary is the Bhagirathi-Hugli which shoots off from the Ganges shortly after its entry into Bengal, and passing through the Murshidabad district and along the western borders of Nadia-Kushtia and 24-Parganas districts meets the sea. This channel was somewhat stronger and wider in the past, but it never was the main channel of the Ganges in Bengal. The Bhagirathi-Hugli channel on the one hand, and the east-south-east course of the main Ganges channel on the other, which assumes the name of the *Padma* in Bengal and which is joined on its way by the Brahmaputra and the Meghna, encompass the big south Bengal delta comprising the districts of Murshidabad, Nadia-Kushtia, Jessore, Faridpur, 24-Parganas, Khulna and Barisal. There are a number of other rivers, or affluents, in the northern districts which flow from north to south and join the big rivers. All these rivers are fed by the snow and waters falling on the easterly portions of the Himalayas and their foothills, and by an abundance of rains over the plains and fringe-hills of Bengal itself, from April to July, which average over 75 inches a year. The rivers and rains together with the alluvial nature of the soil and a tropical climate account for the proverbial fertility of the land and its rich vegetation. The coastline in the south is fairly broken by numerous islands and deltas formed at the mouths of the rivers; but it is generally tidal and remains submerged in water for most part of the year. Moreover, it is rendered inaccessible by dense forests (the *Sundarbans*) which cover a wide tract across the whole southern parts of the three districts of 24-Parganas, Khulna and

Barisal.

Almost the whole of Bengal is a vast alluvial plain with the exception of the foot-hills of the Himalayas in the north, the marginal hills in the east and south-east, and the Rajmahal hills in the west below the point where the Ganges enters the land. It is divided by the river system into four well-marked sections which in ancient times bore distinct names. The northern section, held so to say within the arms of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, was variously known as Pundravardhana, Varendra and Gaud. The eastern part is marked off by the main channel of the Ganges. The greater part of this eastern zone, especially the areas covered by the present districts of Dacca and Tippera, was called *Samatata*. The southern deltaic part, as already mentioned, is demarcated by the Bhagirathi-Hugli in the west and the main channel of the Ganges in the east-south-east. Most of its south-easterly part was known as *Banga*. The section lying to the west of the Hugli-Bhagirathi bore the name of *Rādha*. These identifications are of course only general. It appears that their limits, particularly those of *Samatata*, *Banga* and *Rādha* overlapped one another in the border areas.

As with other countries, the geography of Bengal has had important influences on the course of its history. The rivers and rains have through ages facilitated irrigation and agriculture; but unlike the Indus valley in the western part of the subcontinent, the Ganges-Brahmaputra valley has not been the seat of any ancient civilization. The reason is obviously that the area was at that period of time subject to inundations and full of forests and therefore unsuitable for early settlement and cultivation. The indications are that human settlement and activities started in this deltaic zone at a comparatively much later period. The marshy nature of the southern coastline and the dense forests there have similarly militated against the development of any maritime port in that part, though it is an acknowledged fact that the people of the southern districts have since the beginning of habitation been brought up with and habituated to navigate on the mighty and dreadful internal rivers. In fact the upper parts of the three southern districts of 24-Parganas, Khulna and Barisal appear to



have been reclaimed and brought under human habitation only during the Muslim period. It is only at Chittagong, where the coastline is formed by a depression of the hills and is relatively free from inundations and forests that the only noteworthy maritime ports has existed there since quite an early period. For the same geographical reason the people of this and the neighbouring district of Noakhali have developed a maritime tradition for them at an early period. It was also this south-easterly coastal region which first came into contact with Islam through the Arab traders. Only two other up-stream ports with access to sea-going vessels came into existence somewhat at a later date. The one was up the mouth of the Ganges, somewhere between Sunārgāon and Chandpur, and the other up the Hugli-Bhagirathi channel, near modern Hugli (Tāmralipti, Sāt-gāon, Hugli). The network of rivers has provided means for internal water communications; but it has also contributed in the past to the growth of small political entities in the distinct zones created by the rivers. Seldom we find in pre-Muslim times the development of a political fabric embracing the different zones except for a few short intervals much later in the period when a few monarchs brought more than one of the geographical divisions under their control. This influence of the rivers persisted even in Muslim times. The rise of a number of chiefs in south-eastern Bengal known as the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*<sup>1</sup> whom the Mughals found it hard to bring under domination might be regarded as the last notable manifestation of this geo-historical phenomenon. The river barriers checked the extension of the northern Indian monarchs' jurisdiction in east and south-east Bengal in the Muslim as they did in ancient times. On the other hand west and northern Bengal came on several occasions under the jurisdiction of north Indian rulers in the ancient period, while that was naturally the area which first became the nucleus of the Muslim dominion in Bengal. When Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī, founder of the Muslim rule, selected northern Bengal as the centre of his activities and sought expansion in the north rather than towards

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, Chapter XV.

the east the same geographical factors were at work. The rivers dictated the necessity to build up strong river flotillas with the help of which the Muslims advanced towards east and south Bengal. Finally, the fertility and abundance of land attracted many Muslims from different countries to come and settle in Bengal.

We have no definite knowledge about the racial stock or stocks to which the original inhabitants of Bengal belonged. Scholars differ widely in suggesting "Austro-Asiatic" or "Mongolo-Dravidian" origins for the early inhabitants of the land. Two things are pretty clear, however. In the first place, there are unmistakable indications of a rather widespread race movements in the area in pre-historic and proto-historic times; and, secondly, the people of Bengal exhibit a wide variety of colours and physical features. Both these suggest a conglomeration of various racial stocks. That the Dravidians, hard pressed by the Aryans, moved to the south and east of the Indian subcontinent is a well-established fact. It is reasonable to assume that some of them found their way into Bengal. The Aryan elements are also traceable in some sections of the population. Some tribal people like the Santals, the Khasis, are supposed to be of proto-Australoid origin. The people of southern Chittagong and the Hill Tracts have clear Mongolid features. Coming to the more recent times, we know for certain that the Senas and with them a considerable number of Brahmans came from south India and settled in Bengal. Far more specific instances of immigration are found during the Muslim period. Indeed a large section of the Muslim population of the land are descendants of Muslim immigrants from different lands. Still later we find a number of Arakanese and Portuguese settling in the coastal districts. It is thus clear that the population of Bengal are not homogeneous in origin.

#### II: OUTLINES OF PRE-MUSLIM HISTORY

Nor is the ancient history of the land any very clear, despite the earnest researches of a number of scholars.<sup>1</sup> Indeed prior to the middle of the 8th century A.C. when the Pālas came to power in

<sup>1</sup> See *History of Bengal*, I, Dacca University, 1943.

north Bengal (750 A.C., that is precisely the time when the 'Abbāsids took over the *Khilāfat*) all that we know of Bengal history is the mention of parts of its northern and western areas as peripheral possessions of a few and far between north Indian monarchs. The Hindu mythological literature does of course occasionally mention *Pundras* and *Bangas*, but no further useful geographical or historical information is deducible from those texts. The Greek historians of Alexander's (d. 323 B.C.) campaigns mention a powerful kingdom named *Gangaridai* (or *Gandaridai*) east of the Ganges; but this most probably refers to the Nanda kingdom of north India rather than to Bengal. The Mauryas, who succeeded the Nandas, built up an extensive empire under Aśoka (reigned 273—232 B.C.) which is generally assumed to have included northern, western and southern Bengal, though none of that emperor's 35 inscriptions has been discovered east of Orissa.<sup>1</sup> It was however most probably during Aśoka's time or shortly afterwards that Buddhism spread in the different parts of Bengal. The empire of Aśoka disintegrated shortly after his death and a number of petty dynasties rose in northern and southern India, whereas its north-western region witnessed the intrusion, more or less in succession, of the Bactrian Greeks, the Śakas, the Parthians and the Kushāns. Throughout this long period after Aśoka the history of the different regions of Bengal is almost completely dark. More than five hundred years later, in the fourth century A.C., the Guptas built up a north Indian empire which, even in its widest extent under Samudragupta (reigned 340—376 A.C.) was not a half of that of Aśoka. The Gupta empire included parts of northern and south-western Bengal. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta mentions Samatata (eastern Bengal) as one of the frontier states in the east. During the reign of Samudragupta's son and successor Chandragupta II (reigned 376—413 A.C.) the celebrated Chinese Buddhist traveller Fa-Hien visited India (399 A.C.) and passed through Tāmrālipti (Tamluk) in south-west Bengal which he describes as a thriving port in that part of the Gupta empire. The

<sup>1</sup> See Hultzsch, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. I. (Aśoka's Inscriptions).

Gupta hold over those parts of Bengal does not appear to have gone unchallenged. The Meherauli Iron Pillar inscription of King Chandra, identified with Chandragupta II,<sup>1</sup> speaks of the enemies in Bengal who "uniting together came against him", but that he vanquished them. The claim seems to be justified; for Chandragupta II's son Kumāragupta I (r. 413—455 A.C.) retained his control over at least north Bengal where some of his inscriptions have been found. Thereafter the position is not clear.

The Gupta empire broke up in the early years of the sixth century and there followed another period of confusion and rivalry among petty succession dynasties in northern India. Early in the seventh century we get the glimpse of a rather powerful king at Gauda (north Bengal) named Śasānka. Exactly how much of the other parts of Bengal he could bring under his control is not clear. His energy seems to have been spent, externally, in dealing with his northern Indian adversaries (the Later Guptas and the Maukhāries) and, internally, in persecuting Buddhism and in attempting to replace it by the Śaivite form of Hinduism. Absolutely nothing is known about his successors. The next notable north Indian ruler Harshvardhana (r. 606—647 A.C.) is said to have extended his authority over parts of northern and western Bengal, but the evidence on this point is slender. For a century after Harsha's death utter confusion prevailed over Bengal which was ultimately relieved by the accession to power in north Bengal of the Pālas in or about the year 750 A.C. Two successive rulers of this dynasty, Dharmapāla (r. 770—810 A.C.) and Devapāla (r. 810—850) were powerful enough to extend their sway over the greater parts of Bengal and also to measure their strength with the rulers of northern and southern India (the Gurjara-Pratihāras and the Rāshtrakutas respectively). The power of the dynasty declined after Devapāla; and although his successors continued to rule over a much circumscribed territory till the beginning of the 12th century, a number of petty dynasties rose in different parts of Bengal. The Pālas were Buddhists. Under their patronage the reaction in favour of Hinduism initiated by Śasānka

<sup>1</sup> See R.C. Kar, "King Chandra of the Meherauli Pillar Inscription", *I.H.Q.*, Vol. XXVI (1950), and G.R. Sharma, "Chandra of the Meherauli Pillar Inscription, *ibid.*, Vol. XXI (1945).

was arrested and Buddhism once again became the dominant faith in the land.

This position was reversed, however, by the Senas. These latter came to Bengal along with the Chālukya invaders of south India during the declining period of the Pālas. Early in the 12th century the Senas carved out a small kingdom in west Bengal. Their third ruler, Vijaya Sena (d. 1158 A.C.) brought the greater part of Bengal under his power, establishing his capital at Vijayapura in west Bengal and a second capital at Vikramapura (near Dacca) in east Bengal. Vijaya Sena and his son Vallāla Sena (r. 1158—1179 A.C.) ruthlessly suppressed Buddhism and replaced it by a Brahmanical form of Hinduism with marked emphasis on caste and *Kūlinism* (high birth). The latter's successor, Lakshmansena, continued the policy which seems to have raised against him a host of enemies both within his kingdom and outside it. He soon found himself at war with Gauda (then most probably under a scion of the Pāla family), Kāmrūp (Assam), Kalinga (Orissa) and Bihar. In the later part of his reign southern Bengal became independent under one Dommonopāla. About the same time the Deva family set up an independent kingdom east of the Meghna. Amidst those troubles the Muslims under Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī made their appearance in 1203 A.C. and wrested Nadia and northern Bengal from Lakshman Sena who precipitately fled to east Bengal.<sup>1</sup> He and his successors maintained a precarious existence there for some time more but ultimately succumbed to the expanding power of the Muslims.

### III: MAIN SOURCES OF MUSLIM BENGAL HISTORY

With the coming of the Muslims a more or less systematic history of the land may be traced. This is so obviously due to the existence of a multiplicity of source materials ranging from contemporary historical writings to coins, inscriptions, literary works of the time in Arabic, Persian and Bengali, accounts of foreign travellers and observers, etc. The scope of the present

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter II below.

work would not admit of a detailed and critical analysis of each and every relevant work. Only the most important ones of them are therefore briefly noticed here. It would be convenient, however, to describe the sources with reference to the two broad divisions of the history, namely, the pre-Mughal and the Mughal period.

Sources of the pre-Mughal period may be classified into the following categories:

- (a) Contemporary chronicles written at Delhi;
- (b) Coins and inscriptions of the Bengal Muslim rulers;
- (c) Works by early and contemporary Arab scholars;
- (d) Contemporary writings in Bengal; and
- (e) Accounts of foreign observers and travellers.

(a) *Contemporary chronicles written at Delhi*: The Muslim rulers of Delhi, both in the pre-Mughal and the Mughal period, had a number of histories written by scholars and also patronised other historians who undertook such tasks. No such "official histories", so to say, are found to have been written under the auspices of the Bengal Sultāns. This deficiency is however amply compensated by the histories written contemporaneously at Delhi and other places as well as by the other sources indicated above. Moreover, as the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal was rather an extension of the same process of development in northern India, the histories written at Delhi and elsewhere in northern India have a special relevance to the early phase of Muslim expansion in Bengal as supplying not only a sufficient background information but also many specific details about that expansion. Of such early Delhi chronicles three deserve special mention. The first and foremost is the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāsiri* of Abū 'Umar Minhāj al-Dīn 'Uthmān bin Sirāj al-Dīn al-Juzjānī who held a high post under and composed the work during the reign of Sultān Nāsir al-Dīn Maḥmūd (r. 644–665/1246–1266) and therefore named it after him.<sup>1</sup> The author himself visited Bengal

<sup>1</sup> Text ed. by W.N. Lees, Khadim Husain and Abd al-Hayy, and published in the *Bibliotheca Indica* series of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1863–64. Translated into English from the original Pers. by H.G. Raverty, 2 Vols., London, 1881.

in 1242—1244 during the governorship of Malīk 'Izz al-Dīn Ṭughral Ṭughān Khān, accompanied him in his campaign against Orissa and also acted as a mediator between him and his adversary, Malīk Tamar Khān Qirān, governor of Oudh. From the internal evidence it is also clear that Minhāj al-Dīn took special care to collect materials for the history of the Muslims in Bengal, particularly receiving information from the surviving companions of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī. The *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī* is planned as a general history of Islam, with special emphasis on the author's own period, particularly on the rulers of Delhi. He devotes, however, a special section on the Khaljī Malikis in Bengal,<sup>1</sup> and also refers to its affairs in connection with the Sultāns of Delhi. Though devoting his attention mainly to political and military events, the author makes significant references also to the cultural and benevolent activities of the early Muslim rulers. On the whole it is the earliest and best available source for an account of the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal and its history for the first sixty years.

Next in point of time and importance are the two *Tārikh-i-Firūz Shāhī*s written separately by Diyā' al-Dīn Baranī and Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afīf, during the reign of Firūz Shāh Tughlaq (r. 752—790/1351—1388).<sup>2</sup> The authors did not visit Bengal, but observed its affairs from close quarters, specially as their patron was involved in a rather long-drawn conflict with the first two Ilyās Shāhī rulers of Bengal. The accounts of Baranī and 'Afīf are understandably somewhat tilted in favour of their patron whose apparent failures against the Bengal rulers are glossed over and the latter are depicted as rebels; but otherwise the accounts are correct and useful.

Apart from the three above mentioned chronicles, another early work is the poetical composition of Amīr Khusrau of Delhi called *Qirān al-Sa'adain* (Junction of Two Fortunes). The poet visited Bengal twice, once in 670/1280 in connection with the

<sup>1</sup> *Tabaqāt* No. 20 Persian Text (Bib. Ind.), edn. pp. 146—164.

<sup>2</sup> Baranī's text was edited by Sayed Ahmad Khan (of Aligarh) and published in the Bib. Ind. series, Calcutta, 1862. 'Afīf's text was edited by Mawlavi Vilayat Husain, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1891. English tr. of both is in Elliot and Dowson, Vol. III.

expedition sent against Bengal by Sultān Balban under the command of Prince Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad Bughra Khān; and for a second time in 1325 in the retinue of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq. In between the two dates Amīr Khusrau accompanied the Delhi Sultān Mu'izz al-Dīn Kaiqobād in his march in 1289 against his father and then ruler of Bengal, the above mentioned Prince (then Sultān) Nāṣir Al-Dīn Muḥammad Bughra Khān. The meeting of the two Sultāns on the bank of the river Sarayu in northern India ended in a happy understanding between them which virtually put a seal of formal recognition on the existence of the two Sultanats of Bengal and Delhi. The *Qirān al-Sa'dain* describes this happy meeting.<sup>1</sup> Though essentially a poetical work, it is the best contemporary record of that important event and it throws much side-lights on courtly life and ceremonies of the time. Also, chronologically, it supplies in a way the link between the period covered by the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī* on the one hand and the two *Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhīs* on the other.

Two other notable works of the early period are the *Futūḥ-al-Salātīn*<sup>2</sup> by 'Isāmī and the *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī*<sup>3</sup> by Yahyā bin 'Abd Allah Al-Sarhindī. The former was written in the Deccan during the reign of the Bahmanī Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥasan (748—758/1347—58); and the latter was written at Delhi during the reign of the Sayyid Sultān Quṭb al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh (824—838/1421—1434). These two authors did not visit Bengal; but they refer to its affairs in connection with their description of the Delhi rulers.

(b) *Coins and inscriptions*: A large number of gold and silver coins of the Bengal Sultāns have been discovered. These are now preserved mainly in the British Museum (London), the Dacca Museum and the Indian Museum, Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> The most

<sup>1</sup> An edition of the work by Maulawī Muḥammad Isma'īl was published from Aligarh in 1918. Recently a manuscript of the work in the Gilān Collection, Bahawalpur, with a number of interesting illustrations including paintings showing Bughra Khān's journey by boat from Bengal and the meeting between the father and son has been edited by Dr. A.H. Dani, Islamabad, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Text ed. by Agha Mahdi Husain, Agra, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Text ed. by M. Hidayat Husain, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1931. Translated into English by K. K. Bose, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Baroda, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> These coins have been catalogued and various studies published on them. See Bibliography at the end of this work for details.



important information supplied by the coins is the specific dates of the rulers which help in determining the chronology and even the order of succession mentioned in the Delhi chronicles. The coins also contain various titles and legends, all in Arabic, which throw a good deal of light on the nature and spirit of the administration and also on the personal attainments and attitudes of the rulers. For instance it may be interesting to note that some of the Bengal Sultans acknowledged the legal supremacy of the Baghdad *Khilafat* by adopting such titles as *Yamin Khalifat Allah, Nasir, Amir al-Mu'minin, etc.*, while many others adopted the title of *Khalifa* for themselves. Both these facts are corroborated by the inscriptions. The Muslim dominion of Bengal thus appears as yet another succession *Khilafat* that emerged after the break-up of the 'Abbasid *Khilafat* at Baghdad. Another significant and rather unique constitutional fact revealed by the Bengal Muslim coins is that a number of the Sultans allowed their crown-princes to issue coins in their names, sometimes with full regal titles. Last but not least, the variety and metrology of the coins together with the mention of a number of mint-towns from which coins were simultaneously minted during single reigns are an eloquent testimony to the financial strength and economic prosperity of the Bengal Sultanat throughout the period.

More than two hundred inscriptions of both the pre-Mughal and Mughal period have so far been discovered<sup>1</sup>. The greater number of them, about 160, belong to the pre-Mughal period. The find-spots of these inscriptions extend from western Bihar (one indeed has been found in the Azamgarh district of U.P.) in the west to Assam in the east, and from Dinajpur-Rangpur districts in the north to Khulna-Barisal in the south and Chittagong in the south-east. Provenance-wise, the largest number have every naturally been found in the two capital cities of Gaud and Pandua which have together yielded some 67 epigraphs. Next comes Dacca (with Sunargaon) which was another capital city during the Mughal period, where 21 inscriptions have been discovered. Of the other places Hugli, Murshidabad and Dinajpur

<sup>1</sup> See Bibliography for references.

districts have respectively 17, 15 and 14. The rest have been found at other places. The earliest hitherto discovered inscription dated 640/1242 refers to the time of Malik 'Izz al-Din Tughril Tughan Khan and has been discovered at Bihar Sharif. With regard to Language 144 inscriptions are in Arabic, 21 in Arabic mixed with Persian, 1 in Sanskrit,<sup>1</sup> in Bengali<sup>2</sup> and the rest in Persian. With the exception of a couple of inscriptions on cannons, all the rest are inscribed on black basalt stone tablets varying in sizes according to the length of the texts. Sometimes, however, a lengthy text has been crowded in a comparatively small piece of stone. The greatest number of the inscriptions relate to the construction of mosques; but good many of them commemorate the erection of such other objects bridges, canals, forts, gateways, *Katras*, madrasas, minarets, "sacred buildings", tanks, etc. Those that record the construction of mosques begin almost invariably with suitable passages from the Qur'an and quotations from the *Hadith* relating to the merits of such works<sup>3</sup>. Almost all the inscriptions mention the names of the rulers, the official or person responsible for the construction of their respective objects, together with their titles, the dates, and often an indication of the administrative jurisdiction of the officials concerned. The inscriptions and their find-spots thus help in the determination of chronology and extent of territory of the rulers, give an idea of their public activities such as construction of bridges, mosques, madrasa, etc., supply us with the names of important officials, their ranks and administrative jurisdictions and, at times, indicate the military campaigns of the rulers or their generals. It is from the inscriptions that we get the exact time of Muslim penetration in such areas as Sylhet, south and west Bengal. Again, they are the

<sup>1</sup> Ghiyath al-Din Mahmud Shah Inscription at Dhorail, Dinajpur, dated Saka 1455 (1535 A.C.).

<sup>2</sup> Inscription on Isa Khan's cannon found at Diwanbagh, Dacca (near Narayanganj), dated 1002/1593.

<sup>3</sup> The passages most commonly quoted are :

- إنما يعمر مساجد الله من آمن بالله واليوم الآخر وأقام الصلاة وأتى الزكاة ولم يخش الله عصى أولئك أن يكوّنوا من المتدين - أن المساجد لله فلا تدعوا مع الله أحدا.

The *Hadith* often quoted is :

قال النبي ﷺ من نبى مسجدا لله يبقى به روحه الله نبى الله تعالى له بيتا في الجنة

sole sources supplying the dates and other historical particulars of the extant architectural monuments in the country. The inscriptions also refer to the activities of some of the celebrated Shaikhs of the time. Finally, they are almost an exclusive source throwing light on the art of calligraphy as developed in Bengal. Occasionally there are eulogistic expressions in the inscriptions; but these are on the whole negligible. The inscriptions, together with the coins, may therefore be regarded as the most solid and unimpeachable sources of information on the history of the period.

(c) *Works by Arab scholars*: The works by Arab scholars relating to Bengal may be divided into two categories: the writings of the early Arab geographers and travellers,<sup>1</sup> and the works of contemporary travellers and historians. Of the former the most notable works relevant to Bengal are the *Silsilat al-Tawārikh* by Sulaimān al-Tājir and Abū Zaid al-Ḥasan al-Sirāfi (3rd century H.), *Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* by Ibn Khurdādhbih (d. 300 H.), *Murūj al-dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar*<sup>2</sup> by Al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345 H.) and Al-Idrisī's *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq Fi'khtirāq al 'Āfāq*.<sup>3</sup> These works were all written much before the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal; but they contain stray references to the Arab Muslims' trade contact with the coastal regions of Bengal. They are therefore the only source of information regarding early Muslim contact with that land.<sup>4</sup> To the same category may be placed the famous work of Abū Raiḥān Al-Bīrūnī; but except for a background information it has no direct bearing on Muslim Bengal history.

Of far greater importance are however the works of some contemporary Arab scholars. The most well-known in this series is of course the *Rihla* of Ibn Batūṭah. He visited Bengal around the year 740/1340 when Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn of Sunārgāon was engaged in a conflict with Sultan 'Alī Shāh of Pandua. Ibn

<sup>1</sup> The principal works of the Arab geographers are collected in the series *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leyden, 1879 ff. 8 Vols. The references to the Indian subcontinent are collected and translated into English in Elliot, *Arab Geographers* (also in Elliot and Dowson, Vol. I.), first published in 1867.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. by Muḥyi al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamid, 4 Vols., Cairo, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> The latest analysis and translation of passages relating to the south Asian subcontinent is S. Moqbul Ahmad's *India and the Neighbouring Territories, etc.*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1960.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter II, *infra*.

Batūṭah's account<sup>1</sup> contains, besides other matters, specific reference to this conflict, to the influx of a large number of uprooted Muslims called *Faqīrs* in Bengal, their participation in the country's politics, the traveller's journey to Sylhet and his meeting there with Shaikh Jalāl (mistakenly called Jalāl Tabrizī), and to the economic condition of the land including side-lights on Sunārgāon as a port-town. No less important are Taqī al-Dīn Al-Fāsi's (775—832 H.) *Al-'Iqd al-Thamīn Fī Tārīkh al-Balad al-Amīn*,<sup>2</sup> Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī's (773—852 H.) *Inbā' al-Ghumur bi Anbā' al-'Umur*,<sup>3</sup> and Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī's (831—902 H.) *Al-Tuhfa al-Latīfa Fī Tārīkh al-Madīnat al-Sharīfa*<sup>4</sup> and *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi' li Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'*.<sup>5</sup> These Arab scholars were contemporary with a very critical period of Muslim Bengal history which ensued after the first half a century of Ilyās Shāhī rule. Indeed they are the primary authorities on such important events as the usurpation of power by a Hindu chief named Kāns, his persecution of the 'Ulamā' and destruction of mosques, the conversion of his son to Islam and the latter's accession to the Bengal Sultānat as Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad, his seeking and receipt of recognition as *Khalīfa*, and the establishment of madrasas at the holy cities of Makka and Madina by him as well by an earlier ruler, Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh. Some subsequent writers narrate these incidents acknowledgedly on the basis of the above mentioned contemporary Arab authorities.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad bin Muḥammad, called Ibn Batūṭah, *Kirāb Rihlat ibn Batūṭah al-Musammah Tuhfat al-Nazzar Fi Gharāib al-Amsār wa 'Ajāib al-Asfār*, 2 Vols. in 1, Cairo, 932/1904. Also text ed. and tr. into French by Deffremery and Sanguinetti, 5 Vols., Paris, 1853—1858. Part of the work rendered into English in Elliot and Dowson, Vol. IV, Appendix; another English version is in Yule and Cordier's *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Hakluyt Society, London, 1916, Vol. IV, pp. 1—166. An abridged translation is H.A.R. Gibb's *Ibn Battutah*, London, 1929; and a fuller translation by him is his *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, Cambridge, 1958. Another English tr. is by Agha Mahdi Husam, *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, Baroda, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Fuad Sayyār, 8 Vols., Cairo, 1373 H./1964. Vol. III is specially relevant for Bengal history.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Dr. Hasan Habashī, Cairo, 3 Vols. 1391 H./1971.

<sup>4</sup> Published from Cairo, 1372 H./1958.

<sup>5</sup> It is an encyclopaedic work on notable personalities of the 9th century Hijri. Published from Cairo in 1353—55 H. Vol. II is relevant for Bengal.

<sup>6</sup> For instance 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad bin 'Umar al-Makkī alias Hījī Dabīr (d. ? 1020/1611), *Zafar al-Wāliḥ bi Muzaffar wa 'Alīh* (An Arabic History of Gujrat), ed. E. Denison Ross, 3 Vols., London, 1928. Vol. III is relevant for Bengal and contains the information recorded by the Arab scholars.

(d) *Contemporary literary works in Bengal*: Contemporary writings in Bengal may also be divided into two groups. In one group may be placed a number of letters written to different persons by four prominent Shaikhs of the time,<sup>1</sup> namely, Maulānā Muzaffar Shams Balkhī (a contemporary of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh (792—813/1390—1410), Shaikh Nūr Qutb al-'Ālam, Mīr Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī and Shaikh Sharaf al-Dīn Yahyā Manerī, all contemporaries of Rājā Kāns and Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad (first half of the 15th century A.C.). Though a few in number these letters, specially those of the first three, are very important. The letters of Muzaffar Shams Balkhī express concern about the early Ilyās Shāhī rulers' policy of depending too much upon non-Muslim elements and contain a warning about the dangerous consequences of such a policy. The letters of Shaikh Nūr Qutb al-'Ālam and Ashraf Simnānī relate to the dangers that actually resulted from that policy, namely, the usurpation by Rājā Kāns, and to the Shaikh's role in opposing that usurpation with the help of the Jaunpur Sultān. The letters thus provide significant information about the origin and development of the events recorded by the contemporary Arab scholars mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

In the other group of writings may be included all the literary productions of the time in Bengal in Arabic, Persian and Bengali. The more important ones in each of these languages have been noted in some detail at a later stage in this book (in the chapter on "Literary Activities").<sup>3</sup> They form a supplementary source of information in respect of three aspects of the history of the period. In the first place, they are the source as well as the subject of the literary and intellectual history of the period. The works in

<sup>1</sup> Letters of the first three were discovered by Khan Sahib Syed Hasan Askari who published extract translations of them in *B.P.P.*, 1948, pp. 32—38; *J.B.R.S.*, 1956, Part II, pp. 117—195. The main collection of Shaikh Manerī's letters is entitled *Maktūbāt-i-Ṣādī*. An Urdu translation of it was published from Bihar Sharif under the same title in 1926. It contains also extracts from another work, named *Manāqib al-Asīfiya* by Shāh Shu'ayb, a disciple and nephew of Shaikh Manerī. An English translation of the *Maktūbāt-i-Ṣādī* by Paul Jackson and others (with a foreword by Syed Hasan Askari) under title: *The Hundred Letters*, has been published this year (1980) by S.P.C.K. (Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge), London.

<sup>2</sup> There are also a few biographical works on the Shaikhs and the Sūfis, including their sayings, which are sometimes referred to as "Hagiological literature". But they are for the most part either not contemporary, or not relevant to Bengal.

<sup>3</sup> See *infra*, Chapter XXX.

Bengali in particular show that the language assumed its literary form during this period under the liberal patronage of the Muslim rulers. Secondly, the works by Muslim scholars in all the three languages reveal a sustained effort by the learned section of the society to disseminate a knowledge of Islam among the population. Even most of the literary productions in Bengali were geared that end and to the popularization of the history and traditions of Islam by way of counteracting the influence of the Hindu mythology cast abroad by the Hindu writers of the time. Thirdly, the Bengali literature of the time contain many references to the social life and habits of the Muslims and is therefore valuable for a reconstruction of their social history.

(e) *Accounts by foreigners* : The fifth category of sources consist, on the one hand, a few Chinese records of the commercial and diplomatic intercourse between Bengal and China in the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century, and the accounts of the European travellers, on the other. The Chinese records are mainly six in number.<sup>1</sup>

i. *Tao yi che leo*, compiled by Wang Ta-yuna most probably in the winter of 1349-50.

ii. *Ying yai sheng lan*, which is a general account of the country without any reference to its king or court, compiled by Ma Huan between 1425 and 1432. He came to Bengal as interpreter with the first two Chinese mission early in the fifteenth century.

iii. *Sing ch'a sheng lan*, compiled by Fei-sin in 1436, It is an account of Hou-hien's visit to Bengal in 1415.

iv. *Si yang ch'ao kung tien lu*, compiled in 1520 by Huang Sing-ts'eng. It refers to the various embassies sent by the Bengal ruler to China till 1438.

v. *Shu yu chou tseu lu*, compiled in 1574 by Yen Ts'ongkien, "This is the most complete of all accounts", based "not only on the previous accounts but also on other sources not known to us at present"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These records have been translated into English by P.C. Bagchi with the help of this Chinese "friend and colleague in the Visvabharati, Mr. Hsiang-ling Wu", and published in the *Visvabharati Annals*, Vol.1., 1945, pp. 96 - 134.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 97.

vi. *Ming-she*, an official compilation completed in 1739 but based on old materials.

These accounts throw a good deal of light on the socio-economic condition of Bengal at that time; and also, indirectly, on its political situation. It appears from these records that diplomatic missions were sent to China in 1405, 1408, 1409, 1412, 1414 and 1438-39; and that these were reciprocated by the Chinese emperor at least three times, in 1409, 1413 and 1415. The latter also sent two missions to Jaunpur, in 1412 and 1420 A.C.

The European travellers visited Bengal from the 16th century onwards. It may be recalled that when the Arab adventurer Sayyid Ashraf al-Ḥusainī Makkī (Sultān Ḥusain Shāh) with the help of his Arab and other supporters was consolidating his position on the newly acquired throne of Bengal, the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama, with the help of an Arab guide was landing at Calicut on the west coast of India in 1498. In the early years of the following century and during the reign of Ḥusain Shāh (899—925/1493—1519) the Venetian Nicolo di Conti, the Italian Varthema and the Portuguese Barbosa visited Bengal. Each of these travellers has left an account of his travels.<sup>1</sup> In the second half of the century came the Venetian merchant Caesar Frederick (1563) and the English traveller Ralph Fitch (1585-86).<sup>2</sup> The accounts of these travellers refer chiefly to social and economic conditions. A few others, like Manucci, Bernier and Tavernier, came to Bengal later in the Mughal period and left valuable accounts of its economic and commercial life.

Coming to the Mughal period (including the period of Afghan rule) we have more systematic and detailed histories written both at Delhi and in Bengal. In the later part of the period we have also more numerous records of the various European nations, specially of the English, trading in Bengal. The existence of these abundant materials enables a student almost to dispense with such archaeological sources as coins and inscriptions, so

<sup>1</sup> Nicolo di Conti's account is translated and published in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Vol. XI, Glasgow, 1906; and Varthema's account is translated and published in *ibid.*, Vol. IX, Glasgow, 1905. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa* is translated by Mansel Longworth Dames, London, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> Caesar Frederick's and Ralph Fitch's accounts are in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Vol. X, Glasgow, 1905.

important for the earlier period, though at times they yield valuable information. At any rate their importance, and that of the contemporary literary works, have already been indicated. The European records and accounts relating to the later part of the period are more or less well-known, and their nature would be pretty clear from the list included in the bibliography.<sup>1</sup> Here only the historical works written at Delhi and in Bengal may be noted in some detail.

(a) *Historical works written at Delhi*: The historical works written at Delhi during the Mughal period have a greater relevance now if only because Bengal formed a part and parcel of the Mughal dominions since Jahāngīr's time. Its affairs were therefore very much the affairs of the Delhi monarch. Some of the Mughal emperors wrote their own memoirs, while the others had their histories written by court historians. Such official histories were almost invariably based on the *waqāi'* or official reports of occurrences sent regularly from the provinces by officials appointed for that purpose. Except for the high-flown rhetorics, which was the style of the day, and a dearth of reference to the condition of the people, these histories are absolutely contemporary and reliable accounts in which no fact has been really falsified though at times credit has been given to the emperor where he does not deserve it. Besides these, however, some other histories were written by persons who were not officially sponsored or supported and who are therefore more independent in their judgements and criticisms. One remarkable feature of the official histories is that they are in the nature of year-wise accounts, all the events of each regnal year being grouped together in a separate chapter.

The first and undoubtedly one of the most candid of all historical writings of the Mughal period is the memoirs written by the founder of the Mughal empire, *Zahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur*.<sup>2</sup> He was a scholar of no mean order and was well versed in

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, Bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> It is variously called *Tuzuk-i-Bāburi*, *Wāqī'āt-i-Bāburi* or *Bābur-Nāmah*. Bābur's son Humāyūn is stated to have himself transcribed the work. Emperor Akbar ordered a Persian translation of the memoirs which was completed in 1589-90 by 'Abd al-Rahīm Khān-i-Khānān, son of Bairam Khān. Another Persian translation was made by Shaikh Zain. The English =



Arabic, Persian and Turki. The memoirs, Written in Turki, are a frank record of the emperor's political and military activities, his likes and dislikes, his observations of persons and places he came across, together with penetrating notices of the strength and weaknesses of his own character. According to Elphinstone, Babur's memoirs are "almost the only piece of real history in Asia", "If ever there was a case when the testimony of a single historical document, unsupported by any other evidence should be accepted as sufficient proof", writes S. Lane-Poole, "it is the case with Babur's Memoirs". The history of Babur's son Humayun was written by his sister (Babur's daughter) Gulbadan Begam (Princess Rose-Body, 1523-1603).<sup>1</sup> Jauhar, a servant of Humayun, also wrote an account of this life, specially his life in Persia, entitled *Tadhkira al-Waqu'at*. The official history of Akbar's reign (1556-01605), *Akbarnama* and *Ain-i-Akbari*, were written by Abu al-Fadl ibn Shaikh Mubarak (1551-1602). The *Ain-i-Akbari*, dealing mainly with administrative and statistical information, was in fact intended to be the third part of the *Akbarnama*; but the *Ain* was completed earlier and submitted to Akbar in 1593. While the *Akbarnama* was submitted to him three years later.<sup>2</sup> Abu al-Fadl is past-master in Persian rhetoric and figurative speech; and this undoubtedly detracts from his merit as a historian, for his descriptions are more often than not buried under a mass of round- about expression. His facts about Bengal are not also always correct. He assumes the whole of Bengal as within his master's jurisdiction which was far from the fact, and then describes its revenue and administrative divisions with apparently meticulous but obviously misleading facts and figures. His statements about 'Isa Khan, the Bara Bhuiyan, leader of eastern Bengal, are contradictory and confusing. Far more

= translation from the original Turkish was made by A.S. Beveridge, London, 1921. There is an Urdu translation by Mirza Nasir al-Din Haider, Delhi, 1924.

<sup>1</sup> Translated into English with the Persian text of the only known manuscript of the British Museum by A.S. Beveridge, London, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> The *Akbarnama* was brought upto the 46th year of Akbar's reign by other writers after Abu al-Fadl's assassination in 1602 at the hands of Bir Singh Bundela. Texted. by Ahmad Ali and 'Abd al-Rahim, Bib. Ind. Calcutta, 1873-86. Tr. into English by H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1897-1921. The text of the *Ain* ed. H. Blochmann, Bib. Ind. Calcutta, 1867-77. Tr. into English by Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett, 3 Vols. I Vols. II & III revised by J.N. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1939, 1948, 1949.

valuable from the point of view of Bengal history is the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* of Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad which was completed in 1592-93. Though a non-official general history covering the period from the early Ghaznavid rulers to the 36th year of Akbar's reign, the *Ṭabaqāt* devotes a special section on the pre-Mughal Muslim rulers of Bengal which is based on earlier works.<sup>1</sup> Its description of Akbar's fight with Dā'ūd Khān, the Afghān ruler of Bengal, is also factual and correct. Another non-official history written in Akbar's time is the *Muntakhab al-Tawārikh*<sup>2</sup> by Mulla 'Abd al-Qādir Badāyūnī, a Sunnī Muslim who criticises Akbar's policies and activities. It is a valuable corrective to the verbiage and latitudinarianism of Abū al-Fadl. Of the several other historical writings of the reign the *Tārīkh-i-Alfī* of Mulla Dā'ūd, written in commemoration of the completion of one thousand years of the Hijri era, is notable.<sup>3</sup>

Akbar's son and successor, Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad Jahāngīr (r. 1605—1627) dictated his own memoirs called *Tuzuk-i-Jahāngīrī*,<sup>4</sup> so that no official history of his reign was written. It combines the characteristics of an autobiography with those of an official history in which Jahāngīr, like Bābur, records his own merits and demerits, besides the events of his reign and his thoughts and reflections. His official and courtier, Mu'tamad Khān, also wrote during his reign the *Iqbāl-nāma -i-Jahāngīrī*, which is a history of the reigns of the Mughal emperors from Bābur to Jahāngīr. The official history of Shāh Jahān's reign (1628—1658) the *Pādishahnāmah* was compiled by 'Abd al-Hamīd Lāhawrī (completed by Muḥammad Wārith).<sup>5</sup> Another

<sup>1</sup> Text ed. by B. De, 3 Vols., Calcutta, 1927, 1931, 1935; also tr. into English by him, Calcutta, 1927, 1936 and 1939 (Vol. III revised by Bainī Prasad).

<sup>2</sup> Text ed. by Maulavi Aḥmad Ali, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1968. Tr. into English, Vol. I., by S. A. Ranking, Calcutta, 1898; Vols. II & III by W. H. Lowe, Calcutta, 1884, 1925.

<sup>3</sup> See A. Ḥalīm, "Some Indian Collections of the *Tārīkh-i-Alfī*", *I.H.C. Proceedings of Meeting* (18th meeting), New Delhi, 1942, pp. 108-113.

<sup>4</sup> The memoirs were initially written upto the 12th year of his reign; then it was continued upto the 17th year when, on account of Jahāngīr's illness, its continuation was entrusted to Mu'tamad Khan who brought it up to the 19th year. Finally the memoirs were re-edited during the reign of Muḥammad Shāh (1719—48) and brought upto the end of Jahāngīr's reign. Tr. into English by W. H. Lowe (upto the 12th year), Calcutta, 1889. Complete work tr. into English by A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, 2 Vols., London, 1909, 1914.

<sup>5</sup> Text ed. by Mawlawī Kabir al-Dīn Aḥmad and 'Abd al-Rahīm under the superintendence of Major W. N. Lees, 2 Vols., Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1868. Abridged tr. in Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII.

important historical work of the reign is '*Amal-i-Ṣāliḥ* or *Shāh Jahānnāmāh* by Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambo Lāhawri.<sup>1</sup> The emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658—1707) initially asked Muḥammad Kāẓim, son of Amīn Munshī, to prepare a history of the reign; but when this work, the '*Ālamgīrnāmāh*,<sup>2</sup> was written up to the tenth year of the reign, the emperor forbade its continuation. After Aurangzeb's death his last secretary, 'Ināyat Allāh Khān, urged Sāqī Mustā'id Khān, another high official and a great scholar, to complete the history of the reign with the help of the state archives which were thrown open to him for the purpose. This work, the *Ma'āthir-i-Ālamgīrī*, was completed in 1710.<sup>3</sup> Also, despite the emperor's prohibition, Khāfī Khān wrote secretly another history of the reign entitled *Muntakhab al-Lubāb*.<sup>4</sup> All these general histories contain references to Bengal affairs on appropriate occasions.

(b) *Works written in Bengal:* Of greater importance are however the works written in Bengal, dealing specifically with its affairs, by a number of Mughal officials posted there. The first and foremost of these works is the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī* of 'Alā' al-Dīn Isfahānī, known as Mirzā Nathan and Shitāb Khān.<sup>5</sup> He came to Bengal along with his father, Malīk 'Alī alias Ihtimām Khān who was appointed *Mīr-i-Bahr* of the Bengal *nawwāra* (fleet of war-boats) under Islām Khān (1608—1613). Mirzā Nathan acted as his father's assistant in the Bengal *nawwāra* and took prominent parts in the campaigns against the Bengal chiefs known as the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*<sup>6</sup> and also against the frontier territories of Kuch Bihar, Kāchār, Kāmrūp, etc. For more than 20 years he served in various parts of Bengal, obtaining a very thorough knowledge about its geography and people. During this

<sup>1</sup> Text ed. by G. Yazdani, 3 Vols., Calcutta, 1929—39.

<sup>2</sup> Text ed. by Mawlawis Khādim Husain and 'Abd al-Hai, under the superintendence of W.N. Lees, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1868.

<sup>3</sup> Text ed. by Mawlawi Aghā Ahmad 'Alī, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1873. Eng. tr. (with corrections on the basis of a manuscript of the work supplied by Khan Sahib Syed Hasan Askari, which is stated to be "a much more correct text than the printed Bibliotheca Indica edition") by J.N. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Text ed. by Kabir al-Dīn Ahmad, Calcutta, 1869.

<sup>5</sup> MSS in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Translated into English by Mu'aid al-Islām Borah, 2 Vols., Gauhati, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> See *infra*, Chapter XV.

period and in the course of his campaigns he wrote this work under the pseudonym of *Ghaibī* and in the form of a personal memoir. The work begins with the appointment of Islām Khān as *sūbahdār* of Bengal and brings the narrative upto 1525 when Prince Shāh Jahān, then in revolt against his father, left the province. The *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī* is divided into four books: (i) *Islām Nāmāh*, (ii) *Qāsim Nāmāh*, (iii) *Ibrāhīm Nāmāh* and (iv) *Wāqī'āt-i-Jahān Shāhī*, dealing respectively with the three vice-royalties of Islām Khān, Qāsim Khān and Ibrāhīm Khān, and Prince Shāh Jahān's activities in Bengal as a rebel prince. The book is the most contemporary and faithful account of the Mughal warfare against the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. It also contains much useful information about the social and cultural life in Bengal at that time, with significant side-lights on the Mughal provincial administration and the life of the Mughal officials in the province.

The thread of history from the point where it was left by the *Bahāristān-i-Ghaibī* was taken up, in a way, by the *Subh-i-Ṣādiq* of Muḥammad Ṣādiq Isfahānī. He came to Bengal in 1038/1628 as *Wāqī'a-nawīs* (news-reporter) with the newly appointed viceroy Qāsim Khān Juwaynī, and remained there till the viceroyalty of Prince Shujā', living for many years at Jahāngīrnagar (Dacca) and taking part in the Mughal operation in Koch-Hajo in 1047/1637-38. Ṣādiq was a vastly learned man. The *Subh-i-Ṣādiq* is planned as a work on universal history and geography. Divided into four volumes, its third volume is devoted to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, of which Chapter XII relates to the author himself and the affairs in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> It throws a good deal of light on the political and military events of the time as well as on the intellectual life of the province. Ṣādiq makes particular reference to the influx into Bengal of a large number of Shī'a nobles from different parts of Persia during prince Shujā''s viceroyalty (1049—1070/1639—1660). Another work dealing specifically with Shujā' was written in 1660 by Muḥammad Ma'sūm and is entitled *Tārīkh-i-Shāh Shujā'*.<sup>2</sup> The next notable work, providing

<sup>1</sup> Relevant extracts from the work have been translated and published by Professor A. Halim in *J.P.H.S.*, Vol. I, Part IV, October, 1953, pp. 339—356.

<sup>2</sup> I.O.L. MSS. 533.

a sort of continuity of the narrative, is that of Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad Wālī Tālish, an officer in Bengal during the viceroyalty of Mīr Jumla (1660—1663) in whose Assam expedition he took part. The work deals mainly with that campaign and is variously called *‘Ajā’ib-i-Gharība*, *Fathīya-i-‘Ibriya* or *Tārīkh-i-Mulk-Āshām*.<sup>1</sup>

There are quite a number of works relating to the Bengal rulers (*Nawwābs*) since Aurangzeb's death (1707). These were written mostly during the early years of British rule (third quarter of the eighteenth century); but their authors were close associates and high officials of the *Nawwābs* and were generally participants in the events they describe. The earliest in the series is Āzād Husain's *Naubahār-i-Murshid Qulī Khān*.<sup>2</sup> The history of ‘Alivardī Khān Mahābat Jang's rule was written by Yusuf ‘Alī, a trusted friend and officer of the latter and a son-in-law of Nawwāb Sarfarāz Khān. The work was completed in 1764, but its earlier portion upto the year 1742 was composed almost contemporaneously. It has been posthumously entitled *Aḥwāl-i-Mahābat Jang*.<sup>3</sup> It is a good and faithful account of the events of the time. Another nobleman and relative of ‘Alivardī Khān's, Karam ‘Alī, composed his *Muzaffarnāmah* under the patronage of Muḥammad Ridā Khān Muzaffar Jang, who was deputy *diwān* of Bengal under the East India Company till 1772 and after whose name the work is so called. Karam ‘Alī writes the history of Bengal since 1722, bringing it down to his own time. He was a partisan of Sirāj al-Daulah's cousin and adversary Shawkat Jang. Hence the former has been treated rather unjustly in the work. A concise and useful history from the time of Prince ‘Azīm al-Shān's viceroyalty (1697—1712) till ‘Alivardī Khān's death (1756) was written by another nobleman, Salīm Allah, at the instance of governor Henry Vansittart (1760—64). It is entitled *Tārīkh-i-Bangāla*<sup>4</sup> and is

<sup>1</sup> MSS. in the Bodleian Library (MSS. Or. 589) Oxford; photostat copy in the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dacca. Exhaustive extracts tr. into English by H. Blochmann in *J. A. S. B.*, 1872, pp. 51—96, and by J. N. Sarkar in *ibid.*, 1906, pp. 257—267; 1907, pp. 405—25.

<sup>2</sup> A gist translation of the work was published by J. N. Sarkar in *B. P. P.*, 1950, pp. 1—7; full translation by him in his *Bengal Nawabs*, Calcutta, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Translated by J. N. Sarkar in *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> I.O.L. MSS. 2995. Translated into English by Francis Gladwin under title: *A Narrative of Transactions in Bengal etc.* Calcutta, 1778.

specially valuable for the career and administration of Murshid Qulī Khān and 'Alivardī Khān.

The *Siyar al-Muta'kkhirin* of Ghulām Husain Ṭabāṭabā'ī, son of Hidāyat 'Alī Khān, forms a class by itself. Both father and son, and their relatives, served in high posts under 'Alivardī Khān. The work, completed in 1781, consists of three volumes. The first volume is a general history of the subcontinent from early times till the death of Aurangzeb and is based on Abū al-Faḍl's *Akbarnāma* and other earlier works. It has therefore nothing original in it. The second and third volumes of the work, however, show Ghulām Husain as a really original historian. He deals exhaustively with the history of Bengal from Murshid Qulī Khān's time, bringing the narrative down to his own day. The emphasis of the two volumes is rather on 'Alivardī Khān's and Sirāj al-Daulah's times, of which the political and military events together with the arrival of a number of Iranian nobles and 'Ulamā' and their settlement in Bengal are narrated with meticulous details. Ghulām Husain Ṭabāṭabā'ī was a partisan of Shawkat Jang and was for that reason forced by Sirāj al-Daulah to leave Bengal. Like Karam 'Alī, therefore, Ghulām Husain depicts Sirāj al-Daulah in a black paint. The author was also a partisan of the English, taking part in their fight against Mir Qāsim. Except for this, his work is a mine of information for the period.<sup>1</sup>

Last but not least is Ghulām Husain Salīm Zaidpurī's *Riyād al-Salātīn*,<sup>2</sup> which is the first ever written complete history of the Muslims of Bengal. The author was a *Dāk-Munshī* (Post Master) under George Udney, commercial resident of the East India Company at Malda in the eighties of the eighteenth century. It was at the latter's instance that Ghulām Husain Salīm prepared the work collecting, as he says, "sentence after sentence from every source" and after working thus for two years completed it in 1788.<sup>3</sup> Though the author does not specify all the sources of his history, it is clear from the work that he made use of almost all the

<sup>1</sup> Tr. into English by M. Raymond (later called Haji Mustafā), Calcutta, 1786-89.

<sup>2</sup> Translated into English by Abdus Salam and published with the Persian text by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1904.

<sup>3</sup> The title *Riyād al-Salātīn*, points out the author, is also a chronogram which yields the year of completion of the work (i.e. 1788).

earlier works including the *Ṭabaqāt-i- Nāṣirī*, the *Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī*, and the works of the Mughal historians. He had recourse also to other less known works which are not perhaps now extant, and also, in all likelihood, to the Arabic authorities mentioned earlier. Occasionally Ghulām Husain says, "I have seen in a little book", and cites a historical compilation by one Ḥājī Muḥammad of Qandahar, of which no copy seems now to exist. It is also clear that Ghulām Husain made use of some old inscriptions and monuments at Gaud and Pandua. Indeed, as the translator of the work rightly points out, he is "pre-eminently the historian of Muslim Bengal", for other historians before or after him "dealt only with certain periods of Bengal history, whilst our author's narrative comprises the history of Bengal from the earliest mythological period to the dawn of British rule, with a more detailed account of Muhammadan rulers of Bengal."<sup>1</sup> The *Riyāḍ* was indeed greatly valued by all the earlier modern scholars. Stewart's *History of Bengal*<sup>2</sup> is largely based on it; while Blochmann considered it as "the fullest account in Persian of the Muhammadan history of Bengal."<sup>3</sup> Of late, however, it has been castigated by the late Sir Jadunath Sarkar<sup>4</sup> as "gossipy" and unreliable because, as it appears, of its treatment of Rājā Kāns whom it depicts as a persecutor of the 'Ulama' etc. It may be pointed out here that the *Riyāḍ*'s statements about Rājā Kāns and the whole episode of his usurpation are in accord with the account of the contemporary Arab scholars.<sup>5</sup> Sarkar's indictment of the *Riyāḍ* is thus both unmerited and ill-conceived. Some dates and facts mentioned by the *Riyāḍ*, however, need revision in the light of the more recently discovered coins and inscriptions.

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ* (tr.), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> First published, London, 1813.

<sup>3</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p.210

<sup>4</sup> *H.B.* II, 121, 125 - 128.

<sup>5</sup> See *infra* chapter IX.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE MUGHAL PACIFICATION AND THE BEGINNING OF FRONTIER WARS

Islām Khān had just succeeded before his death in subduing the Afghan leaders and other chiefs. Their complete pacification and consolidation of the Mughals' hold over Bengal was yet to be achieved. Moreover, as the latter succeeded in defeating the Bengal chiefs, the affairs in the north-east and south-east frontiers were bound to attract the new administration's attention. During the previous period of troubles the Assam ruler in the north-east and the Arakanese and the Portuguese in the south-east had made considerable inroads into those frontier regions. A conflict with them now became almost inevitable. Not unnaturally therefore the two immediate successors of Islām Khān in Bengal found themselves confronted with these tasks. These two successors were Qāsim Khān (1023-1026/1614-1617) and Ibrāhīm Khān (1026-1033/1617-1624). The latter died in a battle at Akbarnagar near Rajmahal with Prince Shāh Jahān who had then revolted against his father Jahāngīr. Shāh Jahān held the province for about a year after which it was recovered for the emperor Jahāngīr. His reign was however quickly drawing to a close and for the remaining three years of his life Bengal was governed by three successive viceroys, Mahābat Khān (assisted by his son Khānahzād Khān), Mukarram Khān and Fidā'ī Khān. These two viceroys were in the nature of stop-gap arrangements and they were not marked by any significant event or development.

#### I: VICEROYALTY OF QĀSIM KHĀN (1023—1026/1614—1617)

Qāsim Khān was the brother of the late viceroy Islām Khān and was governor of Monghyr in Bihar before his appointment as viceroy of Bengal. The new viceroy, however, lacked his late brother's ability, intelligence and resourcefulness, and he committed the initial mistake of making some delay in taking up his assignment. For although he was appointed to succeed his brother in Sha'bān 1022/September 1613 he arrived at Jahāngīrnagar about



## CHAPTER II

### EARLY MUSLIM CONTACT WITH BENGALA

The Muslim conquest of Bengal took place in the opening years of the thirteenth century mainly as a sequel to Muhammad Ghorī's expedition in northern India. Long before that, however, early Arab Muslim an established commercial as well as religious contact with Bengal. Particularly its coastal region. This took place in the wider context of the rise of Islam and the expansion of the Arabs shortly afterwards in different directions of the adjacent continents of Africa, Europ and Asia. Inspired by Islam the Arabs not only restored the political unity of the ancient civilized world, but also carried the new message wherever they went. Before long they also built up a strong navy and became the foremost seafaring and maritime people of the then world.<sup>1</sup> Already they had a long commercial tradition behind them; and now, backed by their far-flung state and their powerful mercantile and naval fleet, they carried on extensive maritime trade with the East and the West. It was in the tratin of this maritime commerce that Islam's first direct contact with the south Asian subcontinent was established. As is well known, the illegal and piratical capture of an Arab mercantile vessel, while coming from Ceylon, off the coast of Sind led to the retributive expedition under Muhammad bin Qasim which resulted in the conquest of Sind and the adjoining region shortly after 81 H./700 A.C. The acquisition of this territory had momentous consequences for Islam as well as for the Arabs. It opened the gates for the gradual expansion of Islam and the subsequent establishment of Muslim political power in the subcontinent.

One immediate result of the establishment of Muslim power over the Indus delta, commanding the mouth of the Arabian gulf and the west India coast generally, was that it secured Arab navigation in the area and gave an impetus to their commercial activities in the region. In course of time they extended these activities along the entire coast of south Asia including the coasts

<sup>1</sup> See for instance A.M. Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-Power in the Eastern Mediterranean from the 7th to the 12th century A.D.*, Cairo, 1966.

of Bengal, Burma, Malayasia, Indonesia and as far as China.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately no detailed information exists about this eastern mercantile activities of the Arabs. So far as Bengal is concerned, our knowledge about the early Muslim traders' contact with it is derived from stray and indirect references by the Arab geographers. Some of them speak about flourishing ports and valuable commodities in that part of the world which are clearly identifiable with the coastal region of Bengal and its products. Thus Abū al-Qāsim 'Ubaid Allah ibn Khurdādhbih (d. 300/912), while discussing the places of trade interest on the coast of the Indian ocean after "Sarandip" (Ceylon) and the river "Kudafarīd" (the Godāvarī on the east Indian coast), refers to a port called *Samandar* where rice was produced in abundance and to which aloe-wood was brought down for export from a distance of 15 or 20 days through sweet water (i.e. through inland river) from a territory named *Kāmrūn* and other places.<sup>2</sup> This port of *Samandar* is also mentioned by the famous twelfth century Arab geographer, Abū 'Abd Allah al-Iḍrīsī (d. 561/1164). "Samandar is a large town, commercial and rich", he says, "where there are good profits to be made. It is a port dependent upon Kanauj, king of this country. The city of Samandar is situated on an inlet which comes from the country of Kashmir".<sup>3</sup> It was built upon the bank of a large river which falls into the river *Musala*, called by the "author of the book of marvels the river of perfumes".<sup>4</sup> Al-Iḍrīsī also mentions that the chief produce of Samandar was rice and that aloe-wood was brought there from *Kāmrūt*, 15 days' distance through sweet water.<sup>5</sup>

Now, several points in these two descriptions help us to identify *Samandar* with a port in south-eastern Bengal. First, both

<sup>1</sup> See George Faldo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Medieval Times*, Princeton University Press, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, (E.J. Brill, 1889), pp. 63-64. The Arabic text runs as follows:

ومنها إلى مصب كودافريد ثلاثة فراسخ، ومنها إلى كينكان واللو وكنجة مسيرة يومين وفيها حنطة وأرز ومنها إلى سمندر عشرة فراسخ وفيها أرز يجمل إلى المود من مسيرة خمسة عشر يوماً وعشرين يوماً في ماء عذب من كامرون وغيرها.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Iḍrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, etc., extract translated in Elliot, *Arab geographers*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

the geographers mention *Samandar* in connection with their description of the ports just after the east Indian coast. Ibn Khurdādhbih in particular mentions that it is beyond the river Godāvarī towards the east, at a distance which he mentions as 13 *farāsikh*. This brings us to the deltaic region of south-eastern Bengal. Secondly, both of them speak about the abundance of rice in the locality which is even now-a-days, as it was in early times, the chief agricultural produce of south-eastern Bengal. Thirdly, mention is made of the export of aloe-wood which was brought from *Kāmrūt* or *Kāmrūn*. These names are clearly modified forms of 'Kāmrūp' which is a district in modern Assam. In ancient times the name Kāmrūp was applied not only to the present district limits, but also to a much wider area around it.<sup>1</sup> This forest and hilly region produced enough aloe-wood for export. Even Abu al-Faḍl mentioned in the sixteenth century that the area was noted for aloe-wood.<sup>2</sup> In the 1889 edition of Ibn Khurdādhbih's work, the editor explains the terms *Kāmrūn*, *Kāmrūl* and *Kārmūt*, used by Arab geographers as referring to "Hodie Assam".<sup>3</sup> This Kāmrūp or Assam is situated on the north-east of Bengal and is a land-locked country. Its only outlet to the sea is through the rivers Brahmaputra and Meghna which, passing through Assam, join their streams in eastern Bengal near Dacca. This joint stream is also met by the river Ganges, originating in the Himalayas and passing through northern India. This combined stream falls into the Bay of Bengal near the southern extremities of the modern districts of Bakarganj, Tippera (Comilla) and Noakhali. Evidently this was the "sweet water" route referred to by the Arab geographers through which aloe-wood could be, and was in fact brought down, for export. There is no other water route from Assam to the sea.<sup>4</sup> The journey by a manually navigated country-boat from Kāmrūp to the sea takes now-a-days, as in olden times, from 15 to 20 days. Fourthly,

<sup>1</sup> *Kāmarūp* was mentioned as a frontier state on the east of the Gupta empire in Samudragupta's Allahabad Pillar Inscription (4th century A.D.). See Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III (Gupta Inscriptions).

<sup>2</sup> Abū al-Faḍl *Āin-i-Akbarī*, (tr. Sarkar), Vol. II, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Khurdādhbih, *op. cit.*, p. 64, note (b).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, note (a) where the editor also explains the term as "Amnis Brahmaputra".

Al-Idrīsī's statement that *Samandar* was situated in an inlet, on the bank of a large river fits in well with the coastal landscape of south-eastern Bengal. There is no other mentionable inlet on the whole coastline from Ceylon to Burma where a large river falls into another river, called by Al-Idrīsī river *Musala*. This name has a striking resemblance with the name *Meghna* which, joined by the Brahmaputra and the Ganges, forms a big inlet in south-eastern Bengal. Further, Al-Idrīsī's statement that the inlet came "from the country of Kashmir" is obviously a confusion on his part about the origin of the river Ganges, which is in the Himalayas not very far from Kashmir. Alternatively, he might have meant the river Brahmaputra which also originates in the Himalayas near Kashmir and which, flowing eastward by the north of that great mountain enters Assam by the north-east and falls into the sea through Bengal. In no other way can the statement that the inlet "came from the country of Kashmir" be explained, for excepting these two rivers (the Ganges and the Brahmaputra) no other river originates in that region and reaches the sea; and it is only these two rivers which join their streams before falling into the sea and form the only navigable inlet on the coastline between Ceylon and Burma. Similarly his reference to *Kanauj* being the king of *Samandar* was again a confusion. Kanauj is the name of a city in northern India, not of a king. In the mid-eighth century A.C. this city was a bone of contention among the three contemporary ruling dynasties of the Pālas of Bengal, the Gurjara-Pratihāras of northern India and the Rāstrakūtas of the Deccan. During the reign of Dharmapāla (135—217/752—832) this city was for some time included in the Pāla dominion of Bengal. This fact was probably vaguely known to Al-Idrīsī which prompted him to make the rather curious statement that *Samandar* was "dependent upon Kanauj, king of this country". For, after all, Kanauj had an imperial tradition behind it and was at that time a name to conjure with. It may be added, however, that no ruler in the subcontinent did ever bear the name or title of "Kanauj". Lastly, that *Samandar* was a port near the mouth of the joint stream of the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna is also indicated by what Al-Idrīsī further

writes about it. He says: "One day's sail from the city of Samandar, there is a large and populous island which is frequented by merchants of all countries. It is four days' distance from the island of Sarandip (Ceylon)"<sup>1</sup> Obviously the writer here refers to the big island of Sondip which is situated at the mouth of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna.<sup>2</sup> From time immemorial this island has been a great center of trade and commerce. Even in the sixteenth century Portuguese writers mention Sandip as a flourishing commercial centre.<sup>3</sup> Al-Idrisi distinguishes this island from Sarandip or Ceylon. This is a further help to our identification; for excepting Sandip there is no other mentionable island on the coast from Ceylon to Burma which would answer his description. In fact Al-Idrisi's description is from north to south, that is, the port of *Samandar* is 15 days' journey by sweep water route from Kamrut (Kamrup, Assam), and the populous and large island is one day's sail from *Samandar* whereas the distance between that island and Ceylon is four days' sail. This is roughly the distance between Sondip and Ceylon.

*Samandar*, the port of rice and aloe-wood, was thus situated near Sondip, in the inlet formed by the joint stream of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna. This identification is also indicated by the editor of Ibn-Khurdadhbih's work.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately no port or trade center of that name exists today; nor does any local source mention any ancient port of south-eastern Bengal by that name. It may be assumed therefore that the Arab geographers applied the name *Samandar* to a port of a different local name. Following al-Idrisi's description, however, the ancient port of *Samandar* may be located somewhere near the confluence of the river Brahmaputra and Meghna which, despite some changes in the courses of the rivers through the ages, has been roughly one day's distance from the sea of the island of Sondip. In fact the location of the present confluence is occupied by the port-town of

<sup>1</sup> Elliot, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Sandip was formerly under the jurisdiction of the Noakhali district. Recently it has been transferred to the jurisdiction of Chittagong.

<sup>3</sup> J.N. Sarkar (ed), History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University 1948, p. 360. See also J.A. Campos, The Portuguese in Bengal, Calcutta, 1919.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn-Khurdadhbih, op. cit. p. 63, note (n) which runs as follows: "Jacet haec urbs ad Gangem. Hinc sinus Bengalicus nomen accepit لجة سمندر"

Chandpur. The early history of this place is shrouded in obscurity; but judging from its geographical location and commercial importance, it may be assumed that it has been a center of trade and commerce from very early times. It is also easily approachable by maritime vessels. It is of course hard to say, whether this Chandpur bore the name of *Samandar* in ancient times. In any case, the ancient port of *Samandar* could not have been situated very far from this place. One thing is certain, however, that the people of that part of Bengal do still refer to the mouth of the river and the sea in general as "Samandar". This word seems to be a popular version of the Sanskrit word *Samudra*, meaning 'sea'. Perhaps the Arab geographers were vaguely acquainted with this word and applied it to the port that existed near the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Meghna or perhaps to Chandpur itself.<sup>1</sup>

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the Arabs were familiar with the coastal region of Bengal and its premier port (*Samandar*) long before the Muslim conquerors of Turkish origin set their foot on the land. The way in which the geographers describe the area clearly shows that they were writing for the guidance of the merchants and traders. On most of the occasions these geographers draw the attention of their readers particularly to the valuable articles and commodities that are to be found in the region. Some of them avowedly made their compilations on the basis of reports of sailors and merchants. This fact, together with the difficulties of the time in obtaining accurate information about far-off places, accounts for the vagueness and uncertainty in the descriptions of these writers.

Some scholars think that the land *Jazirat-al-Ramr* mentioned by the Arab geographers also refers to Bengal or its coastal region.<sup>2</sup> We cannot be however as sure about this as we can be about the identification of *Samandar*. Ibn Khurdadhbih says<sup>3</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> Dr. A. Karim identifies 'Samandar' with Chittagong, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Vol. III, No. 2, pp. 13-24.

<sup>2</sup> See A. H. Dani, "Early Muslim contact with Bengal" The proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference., Karachi Session, 1951, pp. 195 II.; M.A. Rahim, *Social and Cultural History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Karachi, 1963, pp. 40-41

<sup>3</sup> Ibn-khurdadhbih, op. cit, p. 65

*Jazīrat al-Rāmī* comes after Sarandip and contains peculiar unicorn animals and little naked people. Al-Mas'ūdī mentions it as a riparian country after Sarandip and on the Indian Ocean.<sup>1</sup> Yāqūt's identification places it as the "farthest land of India" towards the Strait of Malacca (*Baḥr Ṣalāhit*).<sup>2</sup> While all these descriptions convey a vague impression that *Rāmī* was situated somewhere off the coast between the Bay of Bengal and the Straits of Malacca, it is very difficult to point out its exact location. None of the islands in the Indian Ocean or near the Malacca Straits now-a-days bears a name similar to *Rāmī*. On the other hand we know that *Ramu* or *Rame* was a state on the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal comprising parts of the districts of Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts. Its capital was *Ramu*, now a small town in the Cox's Bazar subdivision of the Chittagong district. The English traveller Ralph Fitch, who visited Bengal in 1585-86 also refers to this kingdom of *Rame*.<sup>3</sup> As it was situated on the sea-coast, it is very likely that the Arab merchants were acquainted with it. It may be pointed out that the word *Jazīrah* was used not only to denote islands, but also riparian lands. Sulaimān, the merchant who lived in the middle of the 9th century mentions that the King of *Rāmī* was a powerful ruler with 50,000 elephants and an army of 15,000.<sup>4</sup> Elephants are even now-a-days found in large numbers in the hilly region of the Chittagong district. On the whole, therefore, it may be assumed that the *Jazīrat al-Rāmī* of the Arab geographers was either the state of *Rāmī* on the Chittagong coast or a land not very far from it.

It is thus certain that the early Arab Muslims, in course of their trade with the east, visited the coastal region of Bengal, particularly the port of *Samandar* and prized its exportable commodities like rice, aloes-wood and cotton cloth. This commercial relation of the early Muslims with Bengal is also corroborated by local archaeological evidence. In 1937-38 A.C. excavations at the ancient Buddhist site at Paharpur in the Rajshahi district of

<sup>1</sup> Al Mas'ūdī, *Murāj al-dhahab wa-Ma'ādīn al-jawhar*, Cairo edition, 1938, Vol. I., pp. 129-130.

<sup>2</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Beirut edition, 1957, Vol. III, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Purchas, *His Pilgrims*, Vol. X, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> *Silsilat al-Tawārikh*, extract translated in Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

north Bengal brought to light a coin of the great 'Abbāsīd Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (170-208/786-809). The coin is dated 172/788.<sup>1</sup> Two other 'Abbāsīd coins have also been found in the ruins of Mainamatī in the Comilla district.<sup>2</sup> It may be reasonably assumed that these coins were taken there by some Muslim trader or preacher in the 2nd or 3rd century H. (8th or 9th century of the Christian era). Moreover, an inscription of Ratnapāla (3rd-4th H./9th-10th century A.C.) refers to *Tājikas*.<sup>3</sup> This word is derived from Persian *Tazik*, ("a man of the Tayy tribe"). People in the Far East, especially the Chinese, however, knew the Arab merchants by this term (*Ta-shih*).<sup>4</sup> As Dr. Hourani points out, the association of this term with Arab or Muslim merchants generally was due to the fact that the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs encouraged the fusion of the Arabs and the Persians so that we find mention of Muslims and Arabs far more than of Persians in the 9th century Arabic records of sea trade with the Far East.<sup>5</sup> The term *Tājikas* of the above mentioned inscription may therefore be taken to mean the Arab or Muslim merchants who visited Bengal at that time.

Whether some of the early Arab traders settled in Bengal or its coastal region has been a moot question among scholars. Judging from the fact that a number of the Arabs, in course of their trade with the east, settled in Malabar, Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, Malaya and other places on their trade route, it is not altogether unlikely that some of them might have settled in the fertile coastal area of Bengal, especially as it was then very prosperous with valuable commodities. In this connection it is necessary to remember three important facts. First, political vicissitudes and rivalries within the Islamic land at times forced peoples of dissident groups to seek shelter in countries far beyond the reach of their government but otherwise on convenient lines of communication with their country of origin. Thus we know

<sup>1</sup> K.N. Dikshit, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 55, Delhi, A.D. 1938, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> F.A. Khan, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries in East Pakistan: Mainamatī*, Pakistan Publications, Karachi, n.d., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1898, Vol. LXVII, p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> Hourani, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.



that even before the end of the Umayyad Caliphate some Shi'ah Muslims escaped from persecution in Khorasan and settled on an island in one of the large rivers of China.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, in order to ensure regular supplies of commodities and to look after their trade interests generally, big merchants of the time must have thought it necessary to station some of their own men and agents in distant ports of the east. Thirdly, sometimes natural calamities such as storms and shipwrecks compelled the survivors of such mishaps to seek shelter or settle in nearby lands.<sup>2</sup> Of this last instance we have at least one specific reference with regard to the Chittagong coast. An old Arakanese chronicle, noticed in the mid-nineteenth century, mentions that a few Arabs, after having suffered shipwreck off the coast of Arakan, were settled in some villages of that country by its king Ma-ba-toing (163-194/780-810).<sup>3</sup> It may be noted that Arakan now-a-days borders on the sea to the south of the districts of Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts. In olden days, however, these two districts were sometimes included in the kingdom of Arakan. Hence the statement that the Arabs were shipwrecked near the coast of Arakan is not unusual. The Arabs thus appear to have been settled somewhere near the coastal region of Chittagong.

This settlement seems to have become the nucleus of a gradually growing colony of Muslim settlers. For, according to another Arakanese chronicle, about a century and a half later, King Tsu-la-Taing Tsan-da-ya (340-346/951-957) defeated one *Thura-tan* and erected a victory memorial at a place *Tset-ta-going* (Chittagong).<sup>4</sup> Evidently *Thu-ra-tan* was a person to reckon with and had for some reason or other roused the jealousy of or had posed a threat to the Arakanese king. *Thu-ra-tan*, however, is a solitary figure in the history of that region and is not known to us from any other source. On the basis of the above mentioned Arakanese chronicle, however, Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq explains that the Muslim settlers in the Chittagong region had

<sup>1</sup> Hourani, op cit. p. 63, quoting Al-Mawarzi ed. Minorsky, Ch. 8, sec. 16.

<sup>2</sup> One such instance of shipwreck is narrated in Buzurg, *Kitab Ajaib al-Hind*, pp. 165-168, translated in English and reproduced in *ibid*, pp. 118-120

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the Asiatic society of Bengal*, 1844, Vol. XIII, p. 36

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

gradually grown to be a compact and influential community and had in course of time organised an independent principality of their own comprising the coastal belt of Chittagong and Noakhali districts, and that the ruler of this Muslim principality bore the title of *Sultān*. He says that *Thu-ra-tan* is an Arakanese corruption of the Arabic word *Sultān*.<sup>1</sup>

Though doubts have been expressed about this theory of an early Muslim principality in the region,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Haq's explanation is very plausible. As Dr. M.A. Rahim points out, the "reading of the term *Thu-ra-tan* as *Sultan* cannot be dismissed as fantastic. No Hindu, Buddhist or Arakenese name or title corresponds with the formation of this term... In the circumstances, it is reasonable to suggest that the term *Surtan* is an Arakanese corruption of *Sultan*".<sup>3</sup> He adds that as Chittagong was a very convenient port, the Arab merchants must have stationed a few of their own men there in order to obtain regular supplies of the valuable commodities of that place; and that these people, being educated, enlightened and wealthy, became influential in the port-town. The *Sultān* was the "chief of the influential community of Arab merchants in the Chittagong locality, not the ruler of a kingdom covering the Chittagong and Noakhali districts, as it is supposed".<sup>4</sup>

Whether the *Sultān* (*Thu-ra-tan*) was the chief of the "influential community of Arab merchants", or the ruler of an early Muslim state, or a different person altogether, scholarly opinions are now almost unanimous that a number of Arab Muslims settled on the coastal region of Bengal, especially the districts of Chittagong and Noakhali, much before the military conquest of that area by Muslim generals. For, apart from the anecdotes of the two Arakanese chronicles, there is weighty circumstantial evidence in favour of this conclusion. To begin with, the name Chittagong itself is most probably of Arab origin.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq, *Pūrva Pākistāne Islām*, Dacca, 1948, p. 17; also *Ārākān Rājshabhāy Bānglā Shāhitya* (ed. E. Haq and A. Karim), Calcutta, 1935, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See A.H. Dani, "Early Muslim contact with Bengal", *The Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference*, Karachi session, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> M.A. Rahim, *Social and Cultural History of Bengal*, Vol. I, (1201—1576), Karachi, 1963, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

It is situated at the eastern end of the gulf formed by the wide mouth of the river Ganges, joined a little upstream by the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. In ancient times it was even nearer the present site of Chittagong. Because of this situation, it was generally known in early times as a port near the Ganges coast. Such indeed is the description given of it by Ibn Baṭūṭa,<sup>1</sup> the Chinese accounts of the fifteenth century,<sup>2</sup> and even by Abū al-Faḍl, the famous courtier-historian of Akbar's reign.<sup>3</sup> It may therefore be assumed that those Arab merchants who came in contact with this place began also to call it a port on the Ganges coast or *Shāṭi' al-Gangā* in Arabic. This expression gradually assumed the local form of *Chhatgaon* or *Sadkawan*, and finally became Anglicised as Chittagong.<sup>4</sup> It is also significant that the name, whatever its origin, does not go further back in history than the 10th century A.C., i.e., the very time when the Arabs are known to have visited the locality in course of their trade with the east.

Secondly, there is a great admixture of Arabic words, idioms and phrases in the local dialects of Chittagong and Noakhali districts, particularly in the former. Even many of the patterns of expression closely follow those of Arabic. Any visitor to Chittagong who can manage to understand the local language will not fail to observe that it is a peculiar mixture of Bengali and Arabic words and that, even after so many centuries, about 50% of the vocabulary of the modern Chittagonian language is made up of pure Arabic words or words derived from Arabic roots. Many places of the region bear Arabic names, and many Arab customs and games are prevalent there. Even in appearance and

<sup>1</sup> H.A.R. Gibb, *Ibn Baṭṭuta*, London, 1929, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in N.K. Bhattasali, *Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal*, Cambridge, 1922, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> Abū al-Faḍl, *Ām-i-Akbari* (tr. J.N. Sarkar), Vol. II., p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Enamul Haq, on the basis of the Arakanese chronicle referred to above states that the name Chittagong originated in the remark, *Tset-ta-gong*, meaning, to make war is improper, said to have been made by the invading Arakanese king Tsu-la-Tang Tsan Da-ya. But this, as Dr. Rahim points out, "is untenable, because after the Arakanese king had already made war, conquered the place and built a stone trophy there, he could not reasonably be expected to utter a remark which is attributed to him. It is rather appropriate to suggest that when he approached the place in his expedition he was confronted with its name, *Shat al-Ganga*, which in Arakanese tongue sounded as *Tset-ta-gong*. This obliged him to abandon further campaign. Chittagong was thus a local variation of the Arab name, *Shat al-Ganga*" - M.A. Rahim, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

deportment many Chittagonian Muslims resemble the Arabs. Hence linguists and historians are of opinion that such extensive and deep Arabicization of the locality could not have been the result of mere occasional contact with a few visiting Arab merchants; rather it was the result of long and constant intercourse with a sizeable group of resident Arabs in the locality.<sup>1</sup> It cannot be stated that "these influences could as well be the result of slightly later contact when Muslims had been prominent in Bengal and carried on trade with the Arab world through the Chittagong port."<sup>2</sup> For, when effective Muslim sway was established in the coastal region in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Arab navigation and maritime commercial activities were already on the wane. It was therefore not probable that the Arabs would then influence the inhabitants of that region to such an extent. Moreover, the Muslims who came in the wake of conquest were mostly of Turkish, Iranian and Afghan origin. In fact, it was the Persian language, manners and customs which gained currency after the Muslim conquest, and not Arab influence. If conquest and the consequent influx of Muslims had been the main reason for Arabicization, it would have been more extensive in the areas which first came under their domination and which had been the main theatre of their political and cultural activities. It may be noted in this connection that the Muslims first established their political authority in the west and northwest Bengal in the opening years of the thirteenth century A.C. It was also in this part of Bengal that most of the centres of Islamic learning established under state patronage were located. Yet, Arabian influences generally are very thin in this area, whereas these are the most pronounced and extensive in the districts of Chittagong and Noakhali, the very areas which were the last to come under the Muslims' political domination. The only explanation of this peculiar development is that this locality had been exposed to Islamic Arab influences for a long time before its conquest by the Muslim generals coming from the side of northern India.

<sup>1</sup> See Enamul Haq, *Purva Pākistāne Islām*, Dacca, 1948, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> A. Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal Down to A.D. 1538*, Dacca, 1959, p. 17.

Thirdly, although Muslim arms were first carried upto Chittagong in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, during the time of Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh of Sunārgāon (Dacca), the region as a whole was not brought under effective control till the sixteenth century. Yet, when the Portuguese merchant Barbosa visited the locality about 924/1518, he found the port there, which he calls the prosperous city of "Bengala", inhabited mainly by rich Muslim merchants of Arabia, Persia and Abyssinia, owning large ships and exporting fine cotton cloth, sugar and other valuable commodities to such places as Coromondal, Malabar, Cambay, Pegu, Tennasserin, Sumatra, Malacca and Ceylon.<sup>1</sup> The growth of such a commercial community of Muslims could not have taken place all of a sudden; and it may be reasonably assumed that enterprising Arab and other foreign Muslim merchants had settled in the coastal port-town of Bengal much earlier than its conquest by the Muslims.

Fourthly, there are widely current local traditions that a number of *shaikhs*, '*ulamā*' and *zāhids* (Jurists and Mystics) came to Bengal before its conquest by the Muslims for preaching Islam there. They settled in the country and lie buried in its different parts. The most prominent of these early preachers of Islam in Bengal are Bābā Ādam Shahīd,<sup>2</sup> who lies buried at Rampal in the Munshiganj subdivision of the Dacca district; Shāh Sultān Rūmī, whose grave exists at Madanpur in the Netrokona subdivision of the Mymensingh district;<sup>3</sup> Shāh Sultān Māhīṣawār, who lies buried at Mahasthan in the Bogra district;<sup>4</sup> and Makhdūm Shāh Daulah Shahīd, whose grave exists at Shabazpur in the Pabna district.<sup>5</sup> In the present state of our knowledge it is very difficult to ascertain their exact dates. None of them, however, can be assigned a date later than the early years of the fifteenth century; while at least one of them, Shāh Sultān Rūmī, is

<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt, Vol. II., pp. 144-145.

<sup>2</sup> For tradition regarding him see *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1889, Vol. LVII, pp. 12 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See Enamul Haq, *Bāngē Sūfī Prabhāva*, Calcutta, 1935, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> For tradition regarding him see *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1875, Part I, No. 2, pp. 183-186, and 1878, Part I, pp. 88-95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1904, Part I, No. 3, pp. 262-271. Also *Bengal District Gazetteers: Pabna*, 1923, pp. 121-136.

mentioned in a Persian document of Aurangzeb's reign (1082/1671) to have come to Bengal in 445/1053.<sup>1</sup> It may be noted in this connection that many of the Bengal Sultāns regarded the last resting places of these *shaikhs* with great veneration and built mosques and mausoleums at those spots. More significant is the fact that some of these *shaikhs* are said to have arrived by ship. Thus the tradition regarding Shāh Sultān Māhīṣawār relates that he came to Bengal via Sondip island on the mouth of the Ganges by a boat shaped like a fish or with the figure-head of a fish. Hence he is known as Māhīṣawār or fish-rider. Similarly the tradition regarding Makhdūm Shāh Daulah Shahīd represents him as coming with a band of followers by ship from Yaman. The veracity of these traditions may be arguable, but since even fictions reflect familiar patterns of facts, these traditions are at least reminiscent of the people's familiarity with the arrival of some Muslim personages by the sea route.

Last, but not least, Minhāj al-Dīn Sirāj, author of the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, which is our earliest authority on the Muslim conquest of Bengal in the opening years of the thirteenth century, mentions certain facts which confirm that Muslim traders and preachers visited Bengal prior to that date. He states that when Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī, the conqueror, appeared before the gates of Nadia with only 18 horsemen (his main army following behind), the people guarding the gates took them to be a party of Muslim horse traders and did not therefore oppose their entry into the city.<sup>2</sup> This shows that the people were used to the coming of such parties of traders. Minhāj also mentions that one of the early acts of the new conqueror was to build suitable *khānqāhs* for *Shaikhs*.<sup>3</sup> This is a further indication that there were already a number of preachers of Islam so that the need for building *khānqāhs* for them was realized by the new ruler.

Thus we may conclude that much earlier than Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī's triumphant entry into west Bengal in the

<sup>1</sup> Enamul Haq, *Bāṅge Sūfī Prabhāva*, Calcutta, 1935, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, (tr. Elliot), p. 557.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 540.

opening years of the thirteenth century Muslim traders and preachers had come in contact with Bengal. Specially Arab Muslim traders had visited the coastal region of Bengal not much after the conquest of Sind, if not earlier, and had carried on lucrative trade with the port of *Samandar* and other places. And if the 'Abbāsīd coins found in *Pāhārpur* and *Maināmatī* are taken as proofs of such trading activities, these traders must have penetrated far into the interior as well. The evidence discussed above also indicates that a sizeable number of Arab Muslims had settled in the coastal areas of Chittagong and Noakhali districts. The beneficial influences of these early Muslims and, through them, contact with the Islamic and the outer world generally, left an abiding impress upon the character and belief of the people of this region. This partly explains the better success of Islam and the preponderance of Muslim population in the region although it was one of the last areas to be brought under the political sway of the Muslims.

the territories lying to the north of the Oxus, and the Yamani dynasty, better known as the Ghaznavids, became masters over the territories lying to the south of that river. It was during the reign of the fourth Ghaznavid ruler, Pirāi 362-7H. (972-977 A.C.) that the first conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus of north-west India took place, the latter being the aggressors. As Sir Wolsley Haig observes: "The raja of the Punjab, whose dominions extended to the Hindu Kush and included Kabul, was alarmed by the establishment of a Muslim kingdom to the south of the great mountain barrier and invaded the dominion of Ghazni, but was defeated."<sup>1</sup> During the reign of the next Ghaznavid ruler, Subaktigīn 367—387 H. (977-997 A.C.), the ruler of the Panjab, Jaipāl, again invaded the kingdom of Ghazni. In retaliation Subaktigīn led two successful expeditions against Jaipāl in 986 and 988 A.C. and forced the latter to cede Kabul and the adjoining territory.

The hostilities which thus ensued continued during the reign of Sultān Mahmūd 388—421 H. (998—1030 A.C.), the greatest of the Ghaznavid rulers. The contemporary accounts are not quite clear about the number of his expeditions into India; but it is certain that he led at least 12 campaigns into Hindustan, and that the earlier and greater number of them were directed against the Shāhī rulers of the Panjab - Jaipāl, his son Ānandapāla, and the latter's son Trilochanapāla. It is equally on record that these expeditions were undertaken in response to overt hostilities, or breach of treaty stipulations, or even betrayals on the part of the Shāhīs. Mahmūd's later expeditions into the interior of Hindustan clearly grew out of these earlier ones and were more or less a sequel to the hostilities started by the Shāhīs. In any case it is well known that his principal aim was the establishment of a Central Asian dominion with Afghanistan as its heartland, and for that purpose he had to wage wars as much against the Muslim rulers of Central Asia and Sindh (Multan) as against the non-Muslims in India. His Indian expeditions, however, paved the way for subsequent expansion of Muslim sway over northern India in two principal ways. He destroyed the power of the hostile Shāhīs of

*The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, p. 11.



the Panjab and also crippled the Pratihāras and the Chandellas lying to the east of it, thus in effect forcing the Hindu rulers and princes to recede from their earlier aggressive disposition into a definitely defensive posture. Secondly, during the later years of his reign Mahmūd annexed the Panjab which became, in course of time, the sanctuary for his successors when they were stripped of all their possessions in Persia, Transoxiana and Afghanistan. It was in pursuit of the Ghaznavid princes in the Panjab that their adversaries, the Ghorids, were drawn into India.

Sultān Mahmūd died in 421 H./1030 A.C. and shortly afterwards the Ghaznavid power began to decline. This coincided with the decline of the Il-Khāns as well who were supplanted by the Saljuk Turks. The latter's leader Tughril marched upon Baghdad in 445 H./1054 A.C. and gave a fresh lease of life to the dying 'Abbāsīd Khilāfat. For the following one hundred years the Saljuks not only maintained the unity of the Islamic dominions from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean, but also held in check first the Byzantines and later the Crusaders. By the end of the 6th century H. (beginning of the 12th century A.C.), however, the power of the Saljuks was eclipsed by that of their governor of Khwārizm (modern Khiva) who bore the title of Khwārizm Shāh. The rise of the latter was further facilitated, a little later, by the displacement of the Qara Khitai Turks from their original habitat in Mongolia. Being pressed on by the Mongols and the Chinese they moved westwards and in 536 H./1141 A.C. their leader Gūr Khān (Universal Lord) inflicted a crushing defeat upon Sultān Sanjar and irreparably shattered the Saljukid power. The Qara Khitais failed, however, to consolidate their position in the Central Asian politics. As a result their excursions only left the field open for the Khwārizm Shāhs to increase their power at the expense of the Saljuks. Almost about the same time the Ghaznavids were yielding place to their Ghorid vassals. In 1163 Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muhammad ascended the throne of Ghor as Sultān and, ten years later, occupied Ghazni and placed his brother Shihāb al-Dīn (also known as Mu'izz al-Dīn Muhammad) as governor of that place. The Ghaznavids receded into their Indian possession of the Panjab.

Thus by the middle of the 6th century H. (the second half of the 12th century A.C.) the Saljuks in Persia and the Ghaznavids in Afghanistan were supplanted respectively by the Khwārizm Shāhs and the Ghorids. The rivalry and hostilities between these two rising powers account for the new phase of Islamic expansion over the south Asian subcontinent. The Ghorids, like their predecessors the Ghaznavids, would in all likelihood have remained content with a Central Asian dominion, but they were now very hard pressed by the Khwārizms. In fact during the first two decades of the 7th century H. (before the first quarter of the 13th century A.C. was over) the Khwārizms expelled them not only from Khurasan but even from Ghazni and Afghanistan. Before that happened, however, Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghorī and his lieutenant, Quṭb al-Dīn Aibak, had already laid the foundation of a new Islamic State in northern India.

Thus, three broad streams of facts from the background of Islamic expansion in northern India. First, the aggressiveness of the Hindu Shāhīs of the Panjab had initially drawn the Ghaznavids towards India. Sultan Mahmūd, the great Ghaznavid ruler, not only crushed the Shāhī power, but also incapacitated the two other important Hindu dynasties of northern India, viz., the Pratihāras and the Chandellas, thus preparing the ground for further inroads by any subsequent Muslim general. Secondly, as if to consummate the work of Sultān Mahmūd in this respect, the Ghorids took over just when the Ghaznavid power declined and turned towards India partly with a view to expelling the Ghaznavid prince and his supporters from the Panjab, but mainly being pressed by the Khwārizms. Thirdly, the rise of the latter, besides impelling the Ghorids to seek expansion towards India, contributed to the process in another way. The Khwārizm conquests in Central Asia, as also the eruption of the Mongols almost about that time, displaced many former princes and military chiefs who, with their retinue, now swelled the ranks of the Ghorids in their eastward march. It was one such group of Turkish chieftains and military adventurers under the leadership of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī who planted the victorious banner of Islam on the soil of Bengal.

Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥanimad Ghori's conquests in northern India were, however, not without Hindu encouragement and instigation. Soon after his seizure of Multan and Uch from their Qaramatīyah chiefs in 570 H/1175 A.C., the Hindu ruler of Jammu, Chakradeo, invited him and promised him help for attacking Khusraw Malik, the Ghaznavid prince of Lahore, because the latter was sheltering the Khokars from the oppressions of the Jammu ruler. Being thus encouraged Muhammad Ghori came to India and captured Peshawar in 573 H/1178 A.C. Next he took Shialkot in 582 H/1186 A.C. and the following year Lahore fell to him. He rounded off his new conquests by occupying the fort of Tabarhind (Sirhind in the Patiala state) shortly afterwards. This brought the Ghorid authority upto the border of the Chahaman kingdom of Ajmer whose ruler, Prithvirāja III, had at that time been defeating one after another of his neighbouring Hindu princes in a bid to establish an empire. Muhammad Ghori had no immediate intention to come to a conflict with the Chahaman ruler. In fact, after placing his lieutenant Malik Diyā' al-Dīn with 1200 horsemen in charge of Tabarhind fort, Muhammad Ghori was preparing to depart from India. At that time Prithvirāja, encouraged and supported by his feudatory chiefs and "many other Indian princes, organised an army of 200,000 horses and 3000 elephants"<sup>1</sup> and marched against Muhammad Ghori. The latter met the Hindu army in the field of Tarain 586-7 H. (1190—1191 A.C.), some 80 miles to the north-west of Delhi. The Muslim army appears to have been overwhelmed by sheer weight of number and Muhammad Ghori was obliged to retreat after having received an wound in the arm. To avenge this discomfiture he came back in the following year with an army of 120,000 chosen men. Before commencing hostilities, and in consonance with the teachings of Islam, he sent an emissary named Rukn al-Dīn Hamzah, calling upon Prithvirāja to embrace Islam and to acknowledge his supremacy. Prithvirāja rejected this proposal and marched against Muhammad Ghori with a huge army which consisted, as a Hindu historian records,

<sup>1</sup> R.C. Majumdar (ed), *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. V (The Struggle For Empire), Bombay, 1957, p. 110.

"of 300,000 horses, 3000 elephants and a huge body of infantry. Many rajas of Hindustan helped him, and one hundred and fifty chiefs joined him with the determination of either defeating the Muslims or dying on the battlefield."<sup>1</sup> The two armies met once again at Tarain in 588 H. (1192 A.C.) where Muḥammad Ghori obtained a decisive and complete victory. He then left his lieutenant Qutb al-Dīn Aibak in charge of consolidating the Indian conquest and hurried back to Ghazni to help his brother against the Khwārizms. In the following year he came back and defeated the Gāhḍavāla ruler of Kanauj, Jaichandra, who was killed in the battle. The defeat of Prithvirāja and Jaichandra practically opened the whole of northern India before the Muslims. In 589 H/1193 A.C. Qutb al-Dīn made Delhi his capital and within the course of a couple of years extended his authority right upto the borders of Bihar. The next important development in this process of Muslim expansion was Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī's successful expedition into Bengal.

## II. IKHTIYĀR AL-DĪN MUḤAMMAD BIN BAKHTIYĀR KHALJĪ'S CONQUEST OF NADIA (BENGAL)

Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī originally belonged to Garamsir in northern Afghanistan. He was a man of common birth, having a short physical stature, with long arms and a rather unfavourable countenance. But in the Islamic society neither high birth nor physical charms are necessary for attaining power and position, for careers are truly open to talent. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn was at first employed in the *Dīwān-i-'ard* at Ghor, but lost his job for irregularity in work.<sup>2</sup> He then proceeded towards India about the year 589 H/1193 A.C. Having at first failed to enrol himself in the army of Qutb al-Dīn he went further eastward and took service under Malīk Hizbar al-Dīn, the *Sipāh Sālār* (commander of the army) of Badayun in northern India. After serving there for a short time he went to Oudh where Malīk Ḥusām al-Dīn, the governor, recognized his worth and granted him a *jāgīr* (landed estate) in the south-eastern corner of modern

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī*, tr. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. II, p. 305.

Mirzapur district.<sup>1</sup> This proved to be the turning point in his life and career. He soon gathered under his banner a band of adventurous Turks and consolidated his position by bringing under his sway the neighbouring territories. His successes attracted the notice of the viceroy, Qutb al-Dīn, who is said to have sent him a *khil'at* (robe of honour) "with words of praise and encouragement"<sup>2</sup>. Thus encouraged Ikhtiyār al-Dīn began to extend his authority further towards the east and by 598-9 H/1202-3 A.C. marched against Bihar, then known as Magadha. Probably a scion of the Pāla dynasty, Govindapāla, was then ruling in that territory.<sup>3</sup> With a chosen band of 200 men the Muslim general captured its principal fort, Udantapurī, dominated by a Buddhist monastery (*vihāra*). It was a strong fort which, not very long prior to Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's arrival, had successfully withstood repeated onslaughts of the Sena ruler, Vallāla Sena of Bengal.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore only likely that it surrendered to Ikhtiyār al-Dīn after determined resistance. No details of his operations against the fort are however available. According to one view, Govindapāla was killed in the action.<sup>5</sup>

That there was resistance seems certain, for the contemporary chronicler, Minhāj-i-Sirāj, says that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn put to sword the inmates of the monastery (fort).<sup>6</sup> On the basis of this statement, however, some writers have assumed that the Muslim general put to death "the unopposing inhabitants" of the fort who were all "shaven-headed monks"; that he destroyed its library, and that because of this act Buddhism declined in the region.<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> The *jāgir* is now generally identified by scholars with the modern Bhagwat and Bhuili parganas (26.8 N and 83.3 E).

<sup>2</sup> *Tārīkh-i-Firishṭa*, tr. Briggs, Vol. I, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. R.G. Basak, quoting Gayakara Misra's Manuscript, in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1939, pp. 531 ff; and Dr. D.C. Sircar, quoting the Luckeeserai Inscription, *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. XVIII, 1951, No. 1, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Nundolal Dey, quoting *Vallāla Charita*, in *J.A.S.B.*, 1914, p. 331. See also *H.B.*, Vol. II, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> R.D. Banerjee, *Vāṅglār Itihāsa*, Vol. I., Calcutta, 1915, pp. 212-213; also R.G. Basak, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī*, tr. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. II, p. 305.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. K.R. Qanungo, in *H.B.*, Vol. II, pp. 3-4; Dr. R.C. Majumdar in *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's History and Culture of the Indian People* (Vol. V: The Struggle for Empire), Bombay, 1957, p. 123; K.L. Srivastava in *Journal of Indian History*, Golden Jubilee Volume, 1973, p. 526; among others.

allegation is clearly far-fetched. Nowhere does the contemporary chronicler say that the inmates of the fort were all unopposing, or that they were all shaven-headed monks. Buddhist monks are usually shaven-headed; but since there was a monastery within the fort, it is perhaps far too much of an imagination to assume that all the inhabitants of the place were unopposing monks. On the other hand, it is very unlikely that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn would have killed any person without sufficient cause or without active hostility on his part. Such an act of unprovoked cruelty is certainly inconsistent with the clearly known facts of Ikhtiyār's life which do not in any way mark him out as a blood-thirsty conqueror. Even Dr. K. R. Qanungo, a strong exponent of the allegation, is obliged to note elsewhere that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn "was not blood-thirsty, and took no delight in massacre or inflicting misery on his subjects."<sup>1</sup> It is equally unlikely, as indicated above, that the fort surrendered without any resistance. This is also conceded by Dr. Qanungo who in effect contradicts his thesis of the unopposing nature of the inhabitants of Udantapuri by observing, at a subsequent stage of his discussion, that "such a strongly fortified capital city had certainly been conquered not by a random raid as Minhaj's informants tell us."<sup>2</sup> Nor is there any independent evidence that the Muslim general destroyed all the books of the monastic library. It is also not true that Buddhism declined in that region on account of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's act. The decline of that religion in northern India was a slow process in which the most potent factor was a steady Brahmanical revival championed by such Hindu royal dynasties as the Sungas (185—75 B.C.), the Guptas (310—550 A.C. approximately), the Guḍas (first quarter of the 7th century A.C.), and the Senas (519—601 H./1125—1205 A.C.). When Hieuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, visited northern India in the second quarter of the 7th century A.C., the once flourishing

<sup>1</sup> H.B., Vol. II, p. 9. Some writers, apparently conscious of this aspect of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's character, state that the Muslim general mistook the Buddhist monks as Brahmans and realized his mistake very late. This explanation is as gratuitous as it is misleading. There is no proof whatsoever that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn relished the killing of Brahmans as such. If he was at all interested in killing *Kāfirs* (infidels), even then it is not understandable why he should have made a distinction between Hindu priests (Brahmans) and Buddhist monks.

<sup>2</sup> See "Geographical Notes on some places", H.B., Vol. II, p. 35.

Buddhist centres like Gayā and Pātaliputra were desolate and in ruins. He also noted that the Gauḍa king Śaśaṅka had "cut down the Bodhi tree, destroyed its roots down to the water and burnt what remained"; removed the image of Buddha and replaced it by one of Śiva, and, "having tried in vain to efface" the Buddha's foot-prints at Pātaliputra, had "caused the stone to be thrown into the Ganges."<sup>1</sup> The religion was somewhat revived in Bengal by the Pālas, but the Senas supplanted it and introduced an orthodox type of Hinduism in the territory.

The capture of Udāntapūrī and the reduction of Bihar opened the whole territory upto Bengal before the Muslim general. He consolidated his new conquests by "establishing thānās or military outposts and by introducing administrative arrangements."<sup>2</sup> More important still, his successes raised his status in the eyes of the viceroy, Quṭb al-Dīn who, just about that time, had been halting at Badayun after having conquered the strong fortress of Kalinjar in Rajab 599 H./March 1203 A.C.<sup>3</sup> Ikhtiyār al-Dīn went to Badayun to pay him homage and conciliated him "with rich presents".<sup>4</sup> Quṭb al-Dīn, on the other hand, conferred "many rewards and favours on Ikhtiyār al-Dīn and entrusted the rule of the country of Lakhnawātī (Bengal) to him, and nominated him for the duty of conquering it."<sup>5</sup>

Having been thus confirmed in his new acquisition, and also being entrusted in advance, so to say, with the administration of Bengal, which country he was now empowered to conquer, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn next turned his attention to it. The Sena ruler Lakshaman Sena was then ruling in west Bengal with his capital at Nadia. He was then old and his kingdom was in a tottering condition. Originally the Senas had come from south India in the wake of the Chālukya invasion and had then established themselves in Bengal, at the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century H. (early in the 12th century A.C.), by

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in R.G. Basak, *History of North-Eastern India*, pp. 154-156.

<sup>2</sup> *Riyāṭ*, quoted in *H.B.* Vol. II, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Firishṭa*, tr. Briggs, Vol. I, pp. 197-198.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad Bakhshī, *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, tr. B. Dey, Vol. I., p. 50; also Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab-al-Tawārikh*, tr. Ranking, Vol. I, pp. 81-82.

suppressing the local rulers. From the very inception of their rule, however, the Senas were constantly at war with the descendants of the Pālas, and the rulers of Kāmrūp and Orissa.<sup>1</sup> The Senas also suppressed Buddhism, which was the state religion under the Pālas, and installed in its place an orthodox Hinduism characterized by caste and *kūlinism*. By the time Ikhtiyār al-Dīn captured Bihar, the Sena kingdom was already on the point of disintegration, its northern, eastern and southern parts having been grabbed by rival Sena princes or others. In fact, being constantly at war with the neighbouring rulers, surrounded by an exclusive Brahmanical aristocracy, and having no contact with the people at large, the artificial fabric of the Sena kingdom needed only the *coup d'grace* by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn to meet its natural death. Lakshman Sena seems to have been well aware of his weakness in the face of the Muslims' advance upon Bihar. He could not count upon the support of his subject people, nor could he expect any help from the neighbouring states of Orissa, Mithila (north Bihar) or Kāmrūp, all of whom he had sufficiently alienated earlier in his career. Under the circumstances he had neither the strength nor the courage to face the Muslims single-handed; but he had at least the prudence to realize that the best course open to him was to withdraw to a place not easily accessible to the Turkish cavalrymen. Hence he advised his nobles and courtiers to withdraw to such safer zones<sup>2</sup>, and was himself mentally prepared to do so as soon as the Muslim army knocked at the door. Whether the nobles followed this piece of advice in time is not known; but this is exactly what the king himself did hurriedly when Ikhtiyār al-Dīn arrived at the Sena raja's palace-gate unopposed. Minhāj-i-Sirāj, our "earliest and best authority" on the subject, gives the following account of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's expedition to Bengal:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *The Struggle for Empire*, op. cit., pp. 36-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, Raverty's translation, Vol. I., pp. 556-573.

<sup>3</sup> *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, Bib. Ind. Text, tr. by Qanungo in *H.B.*, Vol. II, pp. 6-7. The Persian text is as follows:

دوم سال آن محمد بختيار لشکر مستعد کرد انيدواز بهار يکشيد و ناکاه بدر شهر نوديه بازو آمد چنانکه هژده سوار

= باوي بیش نبرد و ديگر لشکر متعاقب اومي آمد چون محمد بختيار بدر شهر رسيد هيچکس رازهي ندادبر سبيل



"The second year from this, Muhammad Bakhtiyar got his troops ready, started from Bihar and suddenly entered the city of Nadia so fast that not more than 18 troopers could keep up with him, while the rest of his army were coming up behind him. When he reached the gate of the city he did not molest anyone, but (proceeded) silently and modestly, so that none could imagine that it was Muhammad Bakhtiyar, but most probably the people thought that the (new-comers) were traders who had brought high-priced horses for sale. When he reached the gate of the residence of Rai Lakhmaniya, he drew his sword and began the slaughter of infidels. At that time the Rai... was seated at his meal... when cries rose up from the gate of his palace and the middle of the city. By the time that he learnt what the circumstances were, Muhammad Bakhtiyar had run into his palace and harem and cut down a number of people; (so) the Rai fled away by the back-door with bare-feet."

Thus, in the "second" or "next"<sup>1</sup> year after his meeting with Qutb al-Dīn at Badāyūn, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn marched upon Nadia.<sup>2</sup>

سکونت و رفتار چنانچه هیچکس را گمان نرفت که محمد بختیار است و اغلب آن خلق را گمان می افتاد که مگر باز  
 کاند و اسب های آورده اند تا بدر سرای رای لکهنیه رسد تیغ برکشید و غرا آغاز نهاد درین حال رای بر سر مائده  
 خود بود نشسته و طبقهای زرین سیمین بر طعام بر قرار معهود پیش نهاده که فریاد از در سرای رای و سیاه شهر بر آمد  
 چون آورا تحقیق شد که حال چیست محمد بختیار در میان سرای و حرم رای رانده بود و و خلعی را بر بزرگوار آورده رای  
 به پای برهنه از پس پشت سرای خود.

Major Raverty's translation of the passage runs as follows:

"The following year after that, Muhammad-i-Bakht-yar caused a force to be prepared, pressed on from Bihar, and suddenly appeared before the city of Nadiah, in such wise that no more than eighteen horsemen could keep up with him, and the other troops followed after him. On reaching the gate of the city, Muhammad-i-Bakht-yar did not molest any one, and proceeded steadily and sedately, in such manner that the people of the place imagined that mayhap his party were merchants and had brought horses for sale, and did not imagine that it was Muhammad-i-Bakht-yar, until he reached the entrance to the palace of the Rae Lakhmaniah, when he drew his sword, and commenced an onslaught on the unbelievers."

"At this time Rae Lakhmaniah was seated at the head of his table, and dishes of gold and silver, full of victuals, were placed according to his accustomed routine, when a cry arose from the gateway of the Rae's palace and the interior of the city. By the time he became certain what was the state of affairs, Muhammad-i-Bakht-yar had dashed forward through the gateway into the palace, and had put several persons to the sword. The Rai fled bare-footed by the back-part of his palace;..."

<sup>1</sup> The term used by Minhaj is *duam sāl-i-ān* which means the second or next year.

<sup>2</sup> There has been some disagreement among scholars about the exact date of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's expedition to Nadia. In 1813 Charles Stewart, the first English scholar to write a connected history of Bengal, fixed the date, on the basis of contemporary Persian sources, as 1203-4 A.C. (*History of Bengal*, 2nd edition, 1910, p. 61). In 1871 Edward Thomas, agreeing with Stewart, gave the date 599 H./1202-3 A.C. (*The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, p. 110). In 1873, however, Major Raverty, the translator of the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, pushed the date back by some ten years on the assumption that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn ruled in Bengal for 12 years. There was no valid support for this view in contemporary sources; and two years later, in 1875 H. Blochmann controverted this and held that the date of conquest was 594 or 595 H./1198-99 A.C. He did this on the basis of the two terminal dates in Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's career, namely 589 H./1193 A.C. when he is known to have =

The account given by Minhāj reads like a romance and conveys a rather unfavourable impression about the Hindu ruler. Understandably, an attempt has been made by some modern Hindu scholars to interpret the event in such a way as to make Lakhshman Sena appear in a more favourable light. The pattern of the apology has in fact been set by Dr. K.R. Qanungo. His arguments are as follows:

"There is no evidence", says Dr. Qanungo, "that Navadvip (Nadia) was ever the permanent capital of the Sena king. It was merely a holy place on the bank of the Ganges, where pious people took up their residence out of regard for its sanctity... The city consisted almost entirely of thatched bamboo houses, - the characteristic feature of Bengal architecture... No fort, no protective wall of brick, is mentioned by any historian as guarding Navadvip then or ever afterwards..."<sup>1</sup> Thus belittling the importance of Nadia, and indirectly Muḥammad Bakhtiyār's feat of its capture, Dr. Qanungo goes on to his next point. "Bengal's strategic points of defence against any land attack from the western side", writes he, "was the narrow pass of Teliagarhi near Rajmahal... South of the Teliagarhi lay the enormous land of hill and jungle, popularly called *Jhārkhand* (or forest country), through which no large army could pass on account of its lack of road, food supplies and human habitations. Only small select bodies of hardy cavalry mounted on superb horses could make a dash across this *terra incognita*, if they were guided by local

= come to Hindustan and appeared before Qutb al-Dīn at Delhi, and 602 H./1205-6 A.C. when he died. Between these two dates Blochmann arranges the eight main events in Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's life, placing the conquest of Nadia in 1199 A.C. Although this is purely conjectural, a number of scholars like Manomohan Chakravarty, R.D. Banerji and K.R. Qanungo have in general lent support to Blochmann's dating, bringing some Hindu sources of information into consideration. In 1954, however, Dr. A.H. Dani conclusively proved the uncertainty and untenability of the Hindu sources on the subject. The main point in connection with the fixation of the date is Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's visit, after his conquest of Bihar, to Qutb al-Dīn at Badāyūn which took place, as Dr. Dani shows from *Tāj al-Ma'āthir* and other contemporary and near-contemporary sources, in Rajab 599 H./March 1203 A.C. As Minhāj categorically tells us that the conquest took place in the "second" or "next" year of this visit, Dr. Dani concludes that "the correct date of conquest of Nadiya is 1204 A.D." (*J.H.Q.*, 1954, pp. 133-147). It may be noted, however, that since *Rajab* is the seventh month of the Muslim calendar, which in that year was equivalent to March 1203, the next Hijri year started in September of the same year. (See Freeman - Grenville, *The Muslim and Christian Calendars*, second edition, London, 1977, p. 33). It would therefore be better to say 1203-4, as Stewart has done, than to categorically state the date as 1204 A.C.

<sup>1</sup> *H.B.*, Vol. II, p. 5

zamindars.”<sup>1</sup> Exercising what he calls “allowable historical imagination”, Dr. Qanungo then states that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn came through the *Jharkhand*, and not through the Teliagarhi pass and that the Sena raja “had posted his defensive forces at Teliagarhi only, and left Navadvip denuded of troops, never imagining that the Teliagarhi defences would be turned by the forced march of Turkish horsemen through the wilderness of Jharkhand.”<sup>2</sup> The moment of attack, according to Qanungo, was also opportune: “...the morning court having been dismissed, all people had returned home to take their bath, noon-day meal, and the inevitable siesta, and there was a general slackness and dispersion of people throughout the city, every man going his own way. Such was the moment of attack.”<sup>3</sup> About the final scene Dr. Qanungo builds upon Minhāj’s story as follows: Ikhtiyār al-Dīn “rode through the city slowly and silently in an unostentatious style without molesting any people, so that this small party was naturally taken for a band of foreign traders, who had brought horses for sale... Arrived at the Rajah’s palace-gate, Muhammad Bakhtiyar’s party drew their swords, cut down the unsuspecting and probably half-undressed guards, and pushed into the inner quarters. Immediately on hearing this clamour the second party of silently pacing Turkish horsemen, who had now reached some spot midway between the city-gate and the palace-gate, raised their war cry and began an attack where they were, and the third and the fourth bands of stragglers spurred their jaded horses and hastened to share in the loot. Thus only can we explain the significant statement that at the time of Muhammad Bakhtiyar’s first onset ‘cries rose up from the gate of the Rajah’s palace and the middle of the city’ - i.e., there were two groups of Turks making a simultaneous attack on two parts of the city, and not a single party of 19 horsemen attacking one point only.”<sup>4</sup>

The interpretation is avowedley a mixture of imagination with facts supplied by Minhāj. Even then it fails to alter the basic

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

facts, namely, (i) that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn exhibited uncommon daring by entering the capital of the Sena king with only 18 horsemen, even though his main army was following behind him; (ii) that he stormed and captured the palace of the king with these 18 men, it matters not whether his main army had by that time entered the confines of the city or not; (iii) and that the Sena king, far from attempting to offer any resistance, escaped rather precipitately through the back door of his palace. Laboured and imaginary as Qanungo's explanation is, it is also full of inconsistencies and self-contradictions. It is stated that Nadia consisted entirely of thatched bamboo houses with no protective wall of bricks and inhabited only by pious people seeking religious merit; yet mention is made of the "palace", the "city-gate", etc. There is an obvious element of inconsistency in the attempt to depict Nadia as a city of no political or military consequence and at the same time to suggest that it was easily captured because the Sena rāja had denuded it of troops by sending his army to the Teliagarhi pass. If Nadia was Lakshman Sena's temporary seat of government, what was his permanent capital? And why, knowing full well the advance of the Turks in Bihar, should he have left his permanent capital and continued to live, apparently without adequate defensive arrangements, in the temporary capital? Secondly, the assumption that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn proceeded not through the well-known Teliagarhi pass but through the dense forests of Jharkhand lying to its south is untenable and inconsistent with Qanungo's own reasoning. He says that not to speak of a large army, even select bands of hardy cavalrymen could "make a dash across this *terra incognita* if they were guided by local zamindars." Yet, no explanation is given, except mentioning that this route was used by the Marathas some five hundred years later, how the Muslim general made his way through this inaccessible and unchartered forest, nor whether the local chiefs or zamindars, if there were any, made a common cause with him. If in fact such zamindars or local chiefs on the frontier of the Sena kingdom had cooperated with Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, there would then have been no reason for him at all to take the dangerous and circuitous forest route. Moreover, both according to Minhāj's statement and Dr.

Qanungo's admission, it was not a small band of horsemen but a fairly large army which accompanied Ikhtiyār al-Dīn. Thirdly, the supposition that "the Sena Rajah had posted his defensive forces at Teliagarhi only, and left Navadvip denuded of troops", is not directly or indirectly borne out by any contemporary Muslim or Hindu sources of information. If the Rāja had at all the ability and foresight to post defensive troops at Teliagarhi, it would be unreasonable to assume that he would have completely denuded the capital of troops. Then, if there were troops despatched to Teliagarhi, what happened to them after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's march upon Nadia? We do not hear anything about them after this. Did they also wither away in the jungles just as their Raja had fled towards the east? But then Dr. Qanungo himself contradicts his assumption a little earlier in the course of his discussion by saying that "Laskhman-sena was slumbering in apathy till Bakhtiyar rudely knocked at the palace-gate of Nadia"<sup>1</sup>. Fourthly, equally misleading and discreditable is the picture given of the state of affairs at the palace and capital at mid-day. The description of people going to take their bath at noon, and to rest after mid-day meal, and of even the palace guards relaxing in "half-undressed" state, is rather reminiscent of quiet rural life, than of a royal palace and capital city under the shadow of foreign attack, especially when its ruler is stated to have despatched his troops to intercept the Muslims at Teliagarhi - a situation which rather called for extra alertness and vigilance. Finally, much has been made of Minhāj's statement that "cries rose up from the gate of his palace and the middle of the city". Obviously the chronicler here describes the situation as it appeared to the Rāja who was seated at his meal. Carefully read, the expression "the gate of the palace and the middle of the city" conjointly conveys the meaning that tumults and noises were heard by the Raja from the palace-gate and its vicinity, which was the middle of the city, and by the time he realized what the matter was, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn had already entered the palace. For otherwise it would mean that the palace was situated at a distance from the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

middle of the city, that is at the other end of it, which is improbable and incompatible with the description of Nadia given by Dr. Qanungo himself. If Ikhtiyār al-Dīn "cut down the unsuspecting and probably half-undressed guards, and pushed into the inner quarters" before even the Raja had fully realized the situation, there would scarcely have been noise enough to reach the "spot midway between the city-gate and the palace-gate" where, according to Dr. Qanungo, "the *second* party of silently pacing Turkish horsemen" had arrived by that time, and to act as signal, as Qanungo assumes, for them as well as for "the third and fourth bands of stragglers" to join "the loot". Minhāj clearly tells us that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn rode ahead with 18 horsemen and the rest of his army was coming behind. By no stretch of imagination could it mean that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn divided his army into as many as three or four "bands of stragglers".

The fact was that the reduction of the fort of Udantapūrī and the territory of Bihar had struck terror in the mind of the Sena ruler and he was mentally ready to flee at the approach of the Muslim army. All the available information suggests that the Sena state and army were in a degenerated and disorganized condition. This state of affairs was most probably known to Ikhtiyār al-Dīn who, it is reasonable to suppose, must have obtained information about the enemy's position and strength before undertaking the expedition. This explains why he marched upon the city with only 18 horsemen while his main army came up behind him. There was no need for him to take the rather difficult and inaccessible route through the forest, nor to divide the command of the army in three or four groups. The simple fact was that the Sena ruler, being in an advanced age, and surrounded by hostile kings like those of Orissa, Mithila (north Bihar), and Assam, was fully aware of his weakness and incapacity to face the Muslim general. Lakshman Sena was neither apathetic nor heroic as Dr. Qanungo would have us believe in the same breath, and did just what was reasonable on his part, namely, escaping to a safer region without giving any battle to Ikhtiyār al-Dīn.

The victorious general did not pursue the fleeing Sena ruler who took shelter in the river-girt eastern Bengal, in the vicinity of

Dacca. The contemporary chronicler does not give any information about Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's further military operations, if any, in Bengal. It seems that with the flight of the Sena ruler the whole tract of the country comprising the greater portion of northern and western Bengal passed silently and peacefully under the Muslim dominion. This was but natural; for, as Dr. A. Karim points out, the "defeat or flight of the Hindu Rājās was alone to be achieved, as the masses are hardly known to have given an opposition to the conquerors on political or military grounds."<sup>1</sup> "The ease with which Bakhtiyār Khiljī took possession of Bengal by his surprise of Nadiya", writes H. Blochmann, "stands unparalleled in history, unless we compare it with the almost peaceful transfer of the same country, five hundred and fifty-five years later, from the Muhammadans to the East India Company."<sup>2</sup>

### III. EXTENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAKHNAWATĪ PRINCIPALITY

Ikhtiyār al-Dīn appears to have stayed in Nadia for a short period and then moved towards the north, to Gaud (Lakhnawatī), where he established his seat of government.<sup>3</sup> In any case, the area over which he ultimately established his sway was fairly large. Minhāj, describing the extent of the Lakhnawatī principality says: "the country of Lakhnawati lies to both sides of the Ganges and consists of two wings: the eastern one is called Barendra, to which Deokot belongs; and the western has the name Rāl (i.e., Rādhā), to which Lakhnūr belongs..."<sup>4</sup> Barendra was the ancient name of north Bengal, and Rādhā, that of the area roughly lying to the west of river Hugli. Deokot has been correctly identified with

<sup>1</sup> A. Karim, *Social History of the Muslims of Bengal down to A.D. 1538*, Dacca, 1959, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, No. 3, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> There is no information whatsoever about how and when Ikhtiyār al-Dīn took possession of Gaud. Dr. Qanungo writes, however: "In the absence of details of the conquest we can only infer that like the warriors of the steppes and the desert in every age operating in a civilized country, the army of Bakhtiyār also first ravaged the open country without making an attempt on Gaur, — if it was resolutely defended as a local tradition of doubtful value would have us believe." — (*H.B.*, Vol. II, p. 8). The inference is as unwarranted as is the writer's generalization about the "warriors of the steppe and the desert" with the implication of lack of civilization of the new-comers vis-a-vis the territory of Gaud at that time.

<sup>4</sup> *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 162, quoted by Blochmann, *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, No.3,p.211.

the old fort near Damdamah, on the left bank of the Purnabhava, some 18 miles to the south of modern Dinajpur town. There is some uncertainty about the exact location of Lakhnūr, but following Minhāj's indication that the distance between it and Lakhnawātī was the same as that between the latter and Deokot,<sup>1</sup> scholars are now almost unanimous that it was situated somewhere in the south-western region of modern Birbhum district.<sup>2</sup> There are also other facts bearing on the question. Firishta informs us that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn built a cantonment a little to the south of modern Rangpur town.<sup>3</sup> We also know that on the eve of his Tibet expedition,<sup>4</sup> Ikhtiyār al-Dīn placed his three principal lieutenants in charge of the overall administration and defence of the three strategic regions of his dominion. Thus Muḥammad Shīrān, assisted by his brother Aḥmad Shīrān, was sent with an army to Lakhnūr in order to guard that frontier region against any hostile manœuvres of the Eastern Gāṅga ruler of Orissa (Jāznagar).<sup>5</sup> The western region was placed in charge of Ḥusām al-Dīn to guard it in the direction of Tīrhut and Oudh<sup>6</sup>; and 'Alī Mardān Khaljī was posted in the north-eastern region, in the vicinity of Rangpur.<sup>7</sup> Moreover Minhāj mentions the states lying on the frontiers of the Lakhnawātī dominion just on the eve of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī's accession some six years after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death. These were Bang or eastern Bengal, Kāmṛūp or Assam, Tīrhut and Jāznagar (Orissa).<sup>8</sup> On the basis of all these facts we may obtain a fair idea about the extent of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's dominion. It comprised, besides his original jāgīr in the Mirzapur district in Oudh, southern Bihar, and also a strip of northern Bihar along the northern bank of the Ganges. In

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Qanungo, following Dr. N. K. Bhattasali, places it in Lat. 23.57° and long. 87.19°, i.e. at the extreme south-westerly end of Birbhum district. (*H.B.*, Vol. II., p. 37).

<sup>3</sup> *Tārīkh-i-Firishta*, quoted by Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, No. 3, p. 212n. Dr. Qanungo also writes: "...a little to the north of the ruins of another Damdamah of Bakhtiyar the city of Rangpur grew up at a little later period". (*H.B.*, Vol. II., p. 141n).

<sup>4</sup> See below, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri*, p. 157. It was not an expedition to conquer the territory, as Dr. A. Karim seems to suppose (*A Social History of the Muslims of Bengal*, Dacca, 1959, p. 34).

<sup>6</sup> Ḥusām al-Dīn's headquarters were at Ganguri.

<sup>7</sup> 'Alī Mardān's headquarters were at Barsul, identified by Blochmann to be some place in the Karotoya region of Rangpur.

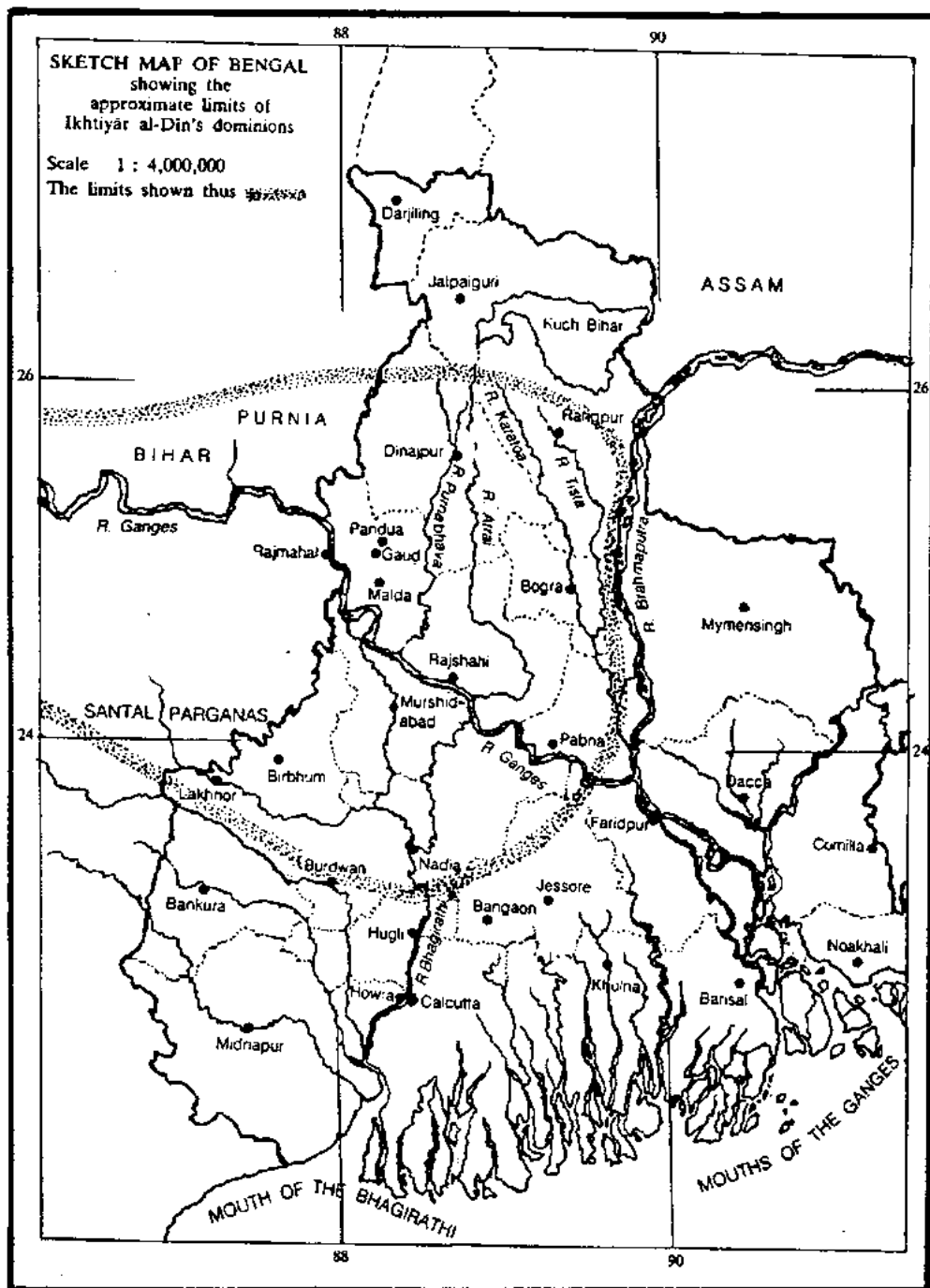
<sup>8</sup> *Tabaqāt*, p. 163.



Bengal proper it included, in the north, the districts of Rajmahal (now in Bihar), Malda, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Rangpur, and probably also Bogra, if the river system formed by the Tista-Brahmaputra-Karatoya is regarded as setting the eastern limit of the Lakhnawatī principality. In fact, to the east of this line lay the kingdom of Kāmrūp, mentioned by Minhāj as a border state. In the south it included Nadia and also, probably, some parts of Jessore lying parallel to it.<sup>1</sup> As Minhāj categorically states that the Lakhnawatī dominion extended on both sides of the Ganges, there seems to be no reason to suppose, as Dr. Qanungo has done,<sup>2</sup> that the Ganges was the southern limit and that, therefore, Nadia was not under the control of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn. There is no evidence at all to assume that the Sena ruler had regained control of it; nor is there any mention of its reconquest by any Muslim general in subsequent times. It is therefore certain that the district continued to be within the possession of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, though no information about its administrative arrangement is available. That the river Ganges did not pose an insurmountable barrier is clear from Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's movement from Nadia to Lakhnawatī as well as his despatch of Muḥammad Shīrān to Lakhnūr (Birbhum). It is also noteworthy that Minhāj spoke of the "eastern" and "western" region on both sides of the Ganges because the river, after entering Bengal, flows in a south-easterly direction. And as Nadia was the southern limit, the intervening district of Murshidabad also must have been included in Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's dominion. In the south-west it was bounded by the Jhārkhand or the forest region to the south of the Teliagarhi pass (the entrance of the Ganges into Bengal) and the upper reaches of the river Damodar, flowing some 25 miles south of the present boundary of the Birbhum district, but otherwise falling almost in parallel line with the present site of Navadwip (Nadia). It may be noted, however, that this extreme south-western region was a bone of contention between the Lakhnawatī principality and the Eastern Gāṅga kingdom of Orissa and when Muḥammad Shīrān returned to the north after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death the Eastern

<sup>1</sup> Minhāj mentions Bangaon, now a subdivision of Jessore, at page 153 of the *Tabaqāt*.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.*, Vol. II., p. 12.



Gānga ruler or one of his vassals must have advanced as far as Lakhnūr (south-western Birbhum), for Minhāj mentions its conquest, or rather reconquest, by Ghiyāth-al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī.<sup>1</sup>

The Muslims adopted their newly conquered country as their home and peacefully settled there. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn lost no time in taking steps for the proper administration of the realm. He assigned the different divisions and districts of the country to the care of his principal nobles and military chiefs. They were entrusted with the duty of maintaining peace and order and also of collecting the revenue. They were also to patronize learning and culture and to look after the moral and material well-being of the people under their respective charges. Through Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's munificence a number of mosques and *madrasas* (centres of Islamic learning) came into being, and his example was worthily followed by his subordinate nobles and administrators.<sup>2</sup> This clearly shows that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn was alive to the need for spreading the message of Islam among the local people who had hitherto been subjected to invidious caste system and a sub-human status under the Brahmanical hierarchy. It may be noted that the system of government established by him was not a sort of "clannish feudalism", as has been wrongly assumed.<sup>3</sup> The people were not expropriated of their lands, nor were they reduced to the position of serfs, as was the case with medieval European feudalism. The system introduced by him was decidedly more humane and liberal, based as it was on the principle of respect for man's talent and character, rather than on the accident of birth and caste, and as such it was a welcome relief to the people and an improvement upon the dynastic and caste oligarchy of the Senas. As already indicated, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn also created three big frontier governorships under Muḥammad Shīrān, Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Iwād, and 'Alī Mardān Khaljī. They were especially charged with the task of defending their respective areas against any outside attack. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn also built a new capital on the site of Guad and established two cantonment towns near Dinajpur and

<sup>1</sup> *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī*, p.163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151.

<sup>3</sup> *H.B.*, Vol.II., p.13.

Rangpur.

#### IV. TIBET EXPEDITION AND DEATH OF IKHTIYĀR AL-DĪN

The last important event in the career of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Bakhtiyār Khaljī was his expedition to Tibet. The contemporary chronicler does not give us any adequate explanation about the motives underlying this venture. Several reasons, however, may be adduced. First, the Muslim general had already brought under his sway the historically best known parts of Bengal. To the south-west, beyond the forest region of Jhārkhand and the river Damodar, lay the territories of the Eastern Gāngas with whom the Senas had not been on good terms. The Jhārkhand region was inaccessible and its southern extremities were river-intersected. Naturally this region did not offer any attraction for the Muslims whose military strength lay in cavalry. Moreover this region served as a buffer zone between the Eastern Gānga territory and the Lakhnawatī principality. Similarly the southern region, not far beyond the modern district of Jessore, was full of forests and rivers and therefore equally in attractive to the Turkish cavalymen. The eastern and south-eastern region was also guarded off by the mighty Brahmaputra-Padma river system. It was behind this protective river barrier that the fugitive Sena ruler had taken shelter. Therefore the only direction which seemed open for expansion before the Muslim general was the north and north-eastern region. Secondly, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn and his fellowmen had come from Afghanistan and Turkistan. The uplands of the hilly north and north-east had therefore a natural attraction for them. Thirdly, Tibet was not altogether an unknown land at that time. Religious teachers and preachers, especially of Buddhism, used to visit that land since at least the time of the Pālas, and there was also a traffic, as Minhāj mentions, in horses which were brought through Tibet to Kāmṛūp and thence to Bengal. It is most likely that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn wanted to secure mastery over this trade route, and also, perhaps, to discover a short-cut route to Turkistan over Tibet.

Be that as it may, the expedition was not undertaken without much forethought and preparation. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn made himself

acquainted with the conditions of the borders of Tibet and its adjoining region. He also explored the lands lying to the immediate north-east of the Lakhnawatī principality, particularly the tribal areas including Kuch Bihar. He established contact with the chiefs of such tribes as the Mech, the Kooch, the Tharu or Thiharu. The chief of the first named tribe embraced Islam at the hands of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, and assumed the name of 'Alī, the Mech.<sup>1</sup> This was a great moral and political triumph for the Muslim general, for, 'Alī agreed to act as his guide through the unchartered land of the north-west, and was instrumental in winning for Ikhtiyār al-Dīn the loyalty and adhesion of the other tribes of the area. Before embarking upon the campaign Ikhtiyār al-Dīn also made adequate arrangements for the defence and administration of the realm in his absence. It was on the eve of this expedition that the three frontier governorships alluded to above were created. That no such defensive arrangement was made for the south and south-eastern region means that he did not apprehend any counter-offensive from the old and effeminate Sena ruler stationed at Vikrampur, near Dacca. The defensive and administrative arrangements thus made by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn prove that he did not intend to risk his newly founded dominion on this venture and was therefore careful to ensure the stability of the state in the event of any mishap befalling him and his party.

Having made these preparations Ikhtiyār al-Dīn started on the expedition, early in 602 H./1206 A.C., with ten thousand well-equipped horsemen. The starting point was most probably the cantonment town near Deokot (Dinajpur). He marched in a north-easterly direction for some days till he arrived at a place called by Minhāj Bardhankūtī, situated on the river "Bāgmatī", which was "thrice as broad as the Ganges". 'Alī the Mech led him and his party thence for ten days up this river when they arrived at an ancient bridge of "hewn stone" by which they crossed the river. 'Alī the Mech took leave of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn from this spot.

The route thus indicated by Minhāj has been the subject of various interpretations by scholars. Following Blochmann most of

<sup>1</sup> *Tārīkh-i-Firishṭa*, Vol. I., p. 59, in Elliott and Dowson, Vol. II., p. 310.

the scholars have thought that the town of "Bardhankūtī" was perhaps some town in north Bengal, then also known as "Pundravardhana", and that the river "Bāgmatī" was most probably the Tista.<sup>1</sup> This identification is, however, highly improbable as it is inconsistent with the other facts mentioned by Minhāj. "Some days' journey" on horseback from the vicinity of Dinajpur, the starting-point of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, and a further ten days' journey from Bardhankūtī, even at a leisurely speed, would bring the expeditionary force far beyond the course of the Tista, whether they proceeded due north or north-east. Secondly, it was unnecessary for Ikhtiyār al-Dīn to requisition the services of 'Alī the Mech to act as guide before crossing the river Tista, that is in the region to the west of that river, which by all accounts was well within the limits of the Lakhnawatī dominion.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, the uncertainty surrounding the question has been rather conclusively removed by the recent discovery of the remains of a huge stone bridge on the old course of the river Barnadī near Gauhati in north Assam.<sup>3</sup> There can be no doubt that this was the stone bridge spoken of by Minhāj and used by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, and that the river "Bāgmatī" was the name given by the contemporary chronicler to the Barnadī, a tributary of the Brahmaputra in north-eastern Assam. Finally, a Sanskrit inscription has also been discovered at a spot opposite Gauhati, recording the destruction of the "Turushka force" (i.e., the Turkish army) in march 1206. As will be related presently, the major part of Ikhtiyār's army was destroyed while recrossing the river on horseback on their return march. It is thus clear that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, starting from the vicinity of Dinajpur, proceeded north-eastward reaching the tribal territories lying to the north-east of Rangpur, between the river Brahmaputra and Kuch Bihar. From this region 'Alī the Mech led him on along the northern shores of the Brahmaputra till the party arrived at the site of the stone bridge on the Barnadī near Gauhati.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See for instance *H.B.*, Vol. II, pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> See A.B.M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> In an article in the *Dainik Pākistan* (Bangali), 26 June 1967, Dr. M. Abdūl Qader suggested that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn pursued the fugitive Sena ruler and arrived at the borders of Sylhet through Comilla, and then proceeded onwards. He says that the place called Biskoot near Karimganj of

After having crossed the river Ikhtiyār al-Dīn left a contingent of his troops there to guard the bridge. With the rest of his army he marched for fifteen days through the labyrinth of the easternmost off-shoots of the Himalayas and on the sixteenth day found himself well within the lands of Tibet. A hard and prolonged contest now followed between the Muslim army and the Tibetan forces. Finding it impossible to make any headway Ikhtiyār retraced his steps. The return march proved too much for the Muslim army, exhausted by almost a month of uninterrupted forced march through difficult hilly lands. To add to their misery, the Kāmrūp Rājā now turned hostile, destroyed all the food and fodder along the way, attacked and dispersed the contingent guarding the bridge and materially damaged it in order to make it impossible for the Muslim army to recross the river. In fact the way in which the destruction of the Turkish forces is recorded by the Sanskrit inscription, alluded to above, clearly suggests that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn was forced to abandon his onward march more because of the hostility and enmity of the Kāmrūp Rājā at the rear of the Muslims than merely because of the resistance of the Tibetan forces. However, after some days' halt on the Kāmrūp side of the river Ikhtiyār al-Dīn desperately attempted to cross the river on horseback. In the process the main body of his army was drowned. He himself succeeded in getting over to the other side with a little more than a hundred of his followers.

The disaster of the Tibet expedition broke the mind and constitution of the valiant general. He was attacked with a consuming fever and, after only three months of his return to Deokot, either fell a victim to the fever or was done to death by 'Alī Mardan Khaljī (602 H./1206 A.C.).

#### V. CONCLUSION

Thus ended the career of one of the brilliant personalities of Islamic history. His life's work was, however, well accomplished. Rising from an obscure position and unaided by either Muḥam-

= Sylhet is the "Bardhankot" of Minhāj and that the river Begalia flowing nearby is the river "Begmari". From this spot the Muslim general marched to the site of the iron bridge near Gauhati. There is, however, no support for this view in contemporary sources.

mad Ghorī or his lieutenant Qutb al-Dīn Aibak, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn carved out a new dominion for Islam which soon rivalled in importance and grandeur even the Sultānat of Delhi. Although somewhat deformed in body, he was yet one of the greatest generals of his time and doubtless excelled his contemporaries in courage, resourcefulness and quality of leadership. He did not find enough time to consolidate his conquests; yet, within that limited period he laid the foundation of a rather elaborate and secure administration for the conquered territories. He was as much interested in the art of peace as he was in that of war. He was mindful of the material as well as moral well-being of his people and was generous to a fabulous extent. He built a number of mosques, *madrasas* and abodes for *shaikhs* and learned men. These all have perished, but, as Dr. Qanungo remarks, "his fame endures, and will endure so long as Islam survives in the land."<sup>1</sup>

The foundation of Muslim rule in Bengal was an event of momentous consequences for Islam and the people of the land. The new land was added to the dominion of Islam when the great 'Abbāsīd Khilāfat was crumbling before the onslaughts of the Mongols. As troubles and political upheavals came in quick succession in Central Asia, bands of Muslim chiftains, generals and learned men found shelter and sanctuary in this distant and safe land. Even dynastic changes at Delhi led to the immigration of fresh bands of Muslims in this land. The newcomers settled in the land and adopted it as their home. Thus new bloods, a new faith and a new culture were brought to the land which subsequently changed its character and destiny as a whole. Secondly, the coming of the Muslims as such brought about an almost immediate revolution in social values and social relationships of the non-Muslim population as well. It freed human intellect and talent from the age-old bondage of caste and superstition. The spectacle of persons of humble origin, of "slaves", attaining the highest pinnacle of power and glory in the society by sheer dint of their personal merit and force of character produced an irresistible impact on the local people in general who

<sup>1</sup> H.B., Vol. II., p. 14.



had hitherto been taught to believe that, because of the accident of their birth, they were precluded not only from coming to the forefront of their society but even from touching the scripture of their own religion. It was not long before that a non-Muslim was found embracing Islam, becoming the ruler of the Muslims and even assuming the title of Caliph! Thirdly, the Muslim conquest brought the land in contact with the outer world, particularly with the civilized orient, in a way in which it had never been before. Its comparative isolation was brought to an end. Henceforth its political, cultural and economic developments were directly and indirectly influenced by those in the outer world. Trade and commerce flourished in an unprecedented way; and before long it emerged as not only politically important but also economically the most prosperous region in south Asia. For one thing, the region now known as Bengal had a rather primitive economy prior to the Muslim conquest, there having been no system of regular coinage in vogue. It was the Muslims who first introduced a regular gold and silver coinage in the land. This fact alone speaks a volume for the tremendous economic transformation which was brought about in the wake of the coming of the Muslims.

CHAPTER IV  
THE INITIAL PERIOD'  
(603-624/1206-1227)

I: INTRODUCTORY

The period from Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death in 1206 to 1227 may be regarded as the initial period of Muslim rule in Bengal. The first seven years of this period were marked mainly by struggles for succession among the lieutenants of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, whereas the subsequent 14 years were covered by the rule of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī, the first notable ruler of Muslim Bengal. It was also during this period that the question of Lakhnawatī's relationship with the Delhi Sultanat came to the fore-front and influenced the course of developments at both the places. These internal problems engrossed the Muslim leaders' immediate attention so that there was very little further expansion of the Muslim dominion during this period.

The death of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn, followed quickly by that of Muḥammad Ghori in the same year, and that of Qutb al-Dīn Aibak four years afterwards, indeed created a vacuum in leadership and brought the process of conquests to a natural halt. Moreover, Muḥammad Ghori's death and the overrunning of Ghor itself by the Khwārizm Shāh shortly afterwards removed the central bond of unity from among the Ghorid lieutenants. Each of them tended to act as an independent ruler in his area. In consequence both at Delhi and Lakhnawatī there were disputes and struggles over succession to the throne. Added to these there were also conflicts between the two, the former attempting to assert its authority over Lakhnawatī, while the latter trying to throw off such suzerainty. Much of the time and energy of the early Muslim rulers in Bengal were spent in this mutual struggle. Thirdly, as Lakhnawatī came to enjoy a covetable position for some reasons, other provincial governors of the Delhi Sultanat also eagerly sought to succeed to its rule. This not only introduced an added complication in court politics at both Delhi and Lakhnawatī, but also obliged the latter's rulers to be on their alert against any surprise move by a fellow governor. There are at least two notable instances when a north Indian governor, taking

opportunity of the Lakhnawatī ruler's absence in an eastern expedition or of his military weakness, marched upon Lakhnawatī and occupied it.<sup>1</sup> It so happened therefore that even when the Delhi Sultān was weak and non-assertive, the Lakhnawatī ruler, instead of turning his attention to the conquest of fresh territories in the east, was tempted to secure his position by carving an eastern Indian dominion out of the possessions of the Delhi Sultān. Under the circumstances progress in the extension of territories towards eastern and southern Bengal was made mainly under one of two alternative situations: (a) when both at Lakhnawatī and Delhi there were strong rulers, but that the ruler at the latter place was unable to turn his attention to the east because of such pressing preoccupation as the Mongol threat from the north-west; while the Lakhnawatī ruler, not daring to cast covetous eyes towards the west, sought an expansion towards the eastern and southern regions of Bengal. Alternatively, (b), when there was cooperation and good relationship between the two, new conquests were well under way. Obviously, this latter situation obtained when the Lakhnawatī ruler was either a nominee of the Delhi Sultān or was submissive to him, at least nominally.

It has sometimes been suggested, mainly by Hindu nationalist writers, that Muslim political expansion in Bengal after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death was slow because of sustained resistance by Hindu rājās. There "were powerful Hindu Rajahs strewn all over the country", states one writer, "who followed a policy of *vetasi-vritti* (i.e. to bend like the supple cane under pressure of the tide and become straight again) with regard to the Muslim rulers of Lakhnawatī. The result was that the same tract had to be conquered several times by Muslim armies before the permanent annexation of it."<sup>2</sup> Except for the fugitive Sena ruler Lakshman Sena, however, we are not told of any other "powerful" ruler in the land at that time. At any rate, the instances of the Lakhnawatī rulers' fight with Hindu chiefs in Bengal proper, as far as we can gather from Muslim and Hindu sources, are very few and far

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, pp. 95, 98-99.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.*, II, 29.

between, and that too on no occasion appears to be prolonged and protracted. On the other hand, if and when a reverse befell the Muslims, as was the case with regard to their fight with the Orissa ruler (who was of course not a Bengal Rājā), it was more due to quarrels and divisions within their own ranks than really to the strength of their enemies. Indeed the type of internecine quarrels that beset the Muslims after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death would in all likelihood have led to the extinction of their rule in Bengal had there really been "powerful Hindu Rajahs strewn all over the country". In fact the nationalist writers seem often to have assumed the existence of Hindu rājās even though no evidence to that effect is available. Thus, for instance, it has been stated in connection with the situation in Bihar after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death: "we are not told by Minhaj what became of Muhammad Bakhtiyar's possessions in Bihar... There are reasons for holding that the submerged Hindu principalities in Bihar about this time threw the scattered Muslim outposts on the defensive... At any rate Bihar seems to have passed silently within sultan Qutb al-Dīn's sphere of authoirty."<sup>1</sup> Once again, no "reasons" are stated in support of this view, nor is any specific Hindu prince of the locality mentioned. One may ask, how many Hindu principalities could have existed in the small area of south Bihar alone, the territory conquered by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn? Also, is it not self-contradictory to state that the Muslim outposts there were thrown on the defensive and, at the same breath, to conclude that the area passed under Sultān Qutb al-Dīn?

Another notable aspect of the nationalist approach is that the supposed or real Hindu chieftains of the time are almost invariably described as "powerful", "vigorous" and "mighty" rulers whereas at the same time their adversaries, the Muslim rulers and governors, are characterized as "feudal chiefs", "vassals", etc., although each one of these latter was evidently in possession of a larger territory, a better civil administration and a more systematic military organization than any of the supposed Hindu chieftains. It needs only to be mentioned in this connection that "feudalism" refers to a peculiar and by no means simple

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

institution that prevailed particularly in medieval Europe, its chief characteristic being the supercession of "state" as an institution by a system of personal estates. In so far therefore as the Muslims did away with the petty political holdings in northern India and Bengal and transformed them into greater political units, they really introduced a unifying force clearly in contrast with feudal tendencies. In any case the application of the term "feudal" in respect of the political and social conditions in the south Asian subcontinent both immediately prior to and after the coming of the Muslims would be arbitrary and inaccurate. The indiscriminate use of such terms as "feudal chief", "fief-holder", "vassal", "frontier march", etc. in connection with the Muslim rulers appears to be deliberately abusive.

Another myth created by the nationalist writers centres round the conflicts between the Lakhnawatī rulers and the Delhi Sultāns. These have too often been depicted as Bengal's struggle for "independence". These conflicts were born out of personal ambitions and had nothing to do with regional or territorial nationalism which was unknown at that time. Besides being an attempt to read modern developments into past events, the myth is also fraught with inconsistency and double-standards. To say that the expansion of Muslim political sway in Bengal was slow because of sustained Hindu resistance, and at the same time to suggest that the Lakhnawatī rulers were fighting Bengal's struggle against Delhi's hegemony is clearly antithetical. Behind the veil of this myth, however, the Delhi Sultāns who attempted to keep Lakhnawatī under control have been dubbed as "aggressors", "invaders", "imperialists", etc. At the same time when the efforts of the Lakhnawatī rulers to conquer the other areas of Bengal have been discussed, the real or supposed Hindu chiefs have been depicted as fighters for freedom against what has been termed as "the rapacity of the Turks". Thus by a subtle application of double standards a uniform denunciation of the main Muslim heroes at both Delhi and Lakhnawatī has been effected, with only a difference in the places of description.

#### II: THE SITUATION AFTER IKHTIYĀR AL-DĪN'S DEATH

Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death was too sudden to enable him to pay

any attention to the question of succession; nor was the Muslim sway in Bengal long enough for any rule in this respect to come into being. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn himself had been nominally appointed by Qutb al-Dīn; but this was in reality a recognition of the accomplished fact of the former's success in carving out a dominion for himself around Bihar. In any case Qutb al-Dīn himself was a viceroy of Muḥammad Ghori whose death about the same time (3 Shā'bān, 602/15 March 1206) rendered it necessary for the former to redefine his own position. In fact Qutb al-Dīn now declared independence at Delhi and assumed the title of Sultān (17 Dhu al-Qa'dah, 602/25 June 1206) and was in turn challenged in his new position by Tāj al-Dīn Yalduz of Ghazni and Naṣir al-Dīn Qabacha in Sind. Under the circumstances things were in a melting pot also at Lakhnawati. As noted earlier, Ikhtiyār al-Dīn had on the eve of his Tibet expedition placed his three principal lieutenants, 'Alī Mardān, Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Iwād and 'Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrān, respectively in charge of the north-eastern, western and south-western regions of his dominion. These three leaders now fell out amongst themselves for succession to the rule of Lakhnawati. 'Alī Mardān, the governor of the north-eastern region (with Ghoraghat as its headquarters) seems to have been present at Deokot at the time of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death. He was therefore the first to take steps to make himself master of the situation; but as soon as the news of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death reached Muḥammad Shīrān, governor of the south-western region, he left his post at Nagor (Birbhum) and marched with his army to Deokot. On his approach 'Alī Mardān withdrew to Ghoraghat. Muḥammad Shīrān advanced against him, defeated and captured him and kept him in confinement. The Khaljī nobles then elected Muḥammad Shīrān as ruler of the Lakhnawati dominion.

This brought to an end the first phase in the struggle for succession. Muḥammad Shīrān attempted to consolidate his position by following a policy of conciliation towards the partisans of 'Alī Mardān and by confirming his nobles in their former posts. This policy was not however quite successful; for soon afterwards 'Alī Mardān managed to escape from his

confinement, went to Delhi and instigated Qutb al-Dīn against Shīrān presumably by making misrepresentations about his loyalty. Qutb al-Dīn was at that time busy in dealing with Tāj al-Dīn Yalduz of Ghaznī. Hence he (Qutb al-Dīn) asked his Oudh governor, Qae-Maz-Rūmī, to march upon Lakhnawatī and settle affairs there. Accordingly the latter proceeded against Lakhnawatī; but 'Alī Mardān stayed on at Delhi.

Hitherto Husām al-Dīn 'Iwad, governor of the western region, had not taken part in the struggle. Now, when Qae-Maz-Rūmī advanced on the frontier, 'Iwad placed his services at his disposal and marched with him towards Deokot. This turned the scale against Muhammad Shīrān who, finding it impossible on his part to oppose the combined forces of Qae-Maz-Rūmī and 'Iwad, vacated Deokot and withdrew eastward. Qae-Maz-Rūmī then placed 'Iwad in charge of the Lakhnawatī dominion and began his return march to Oudh. At this juncture Muhammad Shīrān gathered his forces and advanced towards Deokot. This obliged Qae-Maz-Rūmī to retrace his steps and to inflict a decisive defeat upon Shīrān. He fled with his followers towards Moseda and Santosh (Māhi-Ganj in Bogra district) where, according to Minhāj, "he became a martyr" in the hands of his own nobles who had now become hostile to him because of his misfortunes.<sup>1</sup> His tomb exists in Santosh, on the bank of the river Atreyi. This shows, incidentally, that the Santosh region was under the Muslim sway since Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's time.

Husām al-Dīn 'Iwad ruled Lakhnawatī for about two years (1208-1210 A.C.). Meanwhile 'Alī Mardān had accompanied Qutb al-Dīn in his march upon Ghaznī, had fallen a prisoner in the hands of Yalduz's partisans, but had ultimately managed to return to Delhi after one year's stay at Ghaznī. In recognition of his services and sufferings Qutb al-Dīn now appointed him governor of Lakhnawatī. Armed with this formal appointment and accompanied by a sufficient number of fresh recruits 'Alī proceeded to the eastern dominion to make good his claim over it.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. K.R. Qanungo states on the basis of what he terms "a later Hindu tradition" and which he does not specify that Muhammad Shīrān was "killed in an engagement with some Hindu zamindar of that region" (*H.B.*, II., 17). There appears to be no basis for such conjecture. If there was a fight with any Hindu zamindar it would have been mentioned by Minhāj.

Husām al-Dīn did not, however, offer any opposition. Instead, as he had done on the previous occasion of Qae-Maz-Rūmī's mission, he submitted peacefully to the Delhi Sultān's nominee, received him with due respect, and after making over charge of the province to him retired into the background.

Soon after 'Alī Mardān had established his authority at Lakhnawatī Sultān Qutb al-Dīn died at Delhi in November 1210 A.C. The Lahore and Delhi nobles then set up rival candidates for the Sultānat, the former espousing the cause of Arām Shāh, a reputed son of Qutb al-Dīn's, and the latter supporting Iltutmish, his son-in-law and governor of Badayun. To complicate the situation further, Naṣīr al-Dīn Qabacha assumed independence in Sind, while Tāj al-Dīn Yalduz of Ghazni meditated a march upon Delhi. Under the situation, and perhaps not feeling sure about the attitude of the new Sultān who would succeed to the Delhi throne, 'Alī Mardān also assumed independence at Lakhnawatī and styled himself Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn.

Sultan 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī Mardān was a capable and vigorous ruler, but was vindictive and ruthless. He suppressed the partisans of the deceased Muḥammad Shīrān and brought the Bogra region under his effective control. He also seems to have tactfully banished some ambitious and rival nobles; for the contemporary chronicler records that he "began issuing orders of assignment on different parts of Hindustan" and provided the grantees with the expenses of travel to their distant assignments.<sup>1</sup> 'Alī Mardān reasserted the Muslim authority, however, over the south-western region which Muḥammad Shīrān had abandoned when he marched upon Deokot. During 'Alī Mardān's time Bihar was also within the limits of the Lakhnawatī dominion. Minhāj further informs us that the "rāis of the surrounding country trembled in fear (of 'Alī Mardān) and sent him tribute and *kharāj*". This probably indicates that 'Alī Mardān was able to inspire awe and respect among the neighbouring Hindu rulers of Bang, Kāmruṇ and Tirhut. His policy of blood and iron, however, soon made him unpopular with the Khajjī nobility. Specially there seems to have developed an antagonism between the old nobility (i.e., the

<sup>1</sup> *Minhāj*, 150.



supporters of Muhammad Shīrān and Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Iwād) and the new nobility who had accompanied 'Alī Mardān from Delhi. At the latter place also things had changed by 1212 A.C. when Iltutmish had overcome all his rivals and had securely established himself on the throne. Taking advantage of this situation, and perhaps with the tacit consent and support of the Delhi Sultān, Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Iwād emerged from the background and organized the discontented nobles who overthrew and killed 'Alī Mardān in 1213 and elected 'Iwād as their ruler. It speaks much for the latter's tact and foresight that he had throughout the period of 'Alī Mardān's rule been able to escape his suspicion and vindictiveness.

### III: GHIYĀTH AL-DĪN 'IWĀD KHALJĪ: THE QUESTION OF HIS EARLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DELHI SULTĀN ILTUTMISH

The accession of Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Iwād marked the end of the struggle for succession which had ensued since Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death. On his accession to power for the second time Ḥusām al-Dīn took the name of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī. Whether he assumed also the title of *Sultān* from the beginning is not certain. According to one group of scholars he owed allegiance to the Delhi Sultān for the first few years and then, most probably from the year 1219 A.C., assumed independence and the title of Sultān. According to others, however, he is said to have assumed the title of Sultān from the beginning and did not owe allegiance to the Delhi Sultān in the early years of his ('Iwād's) rule. The question in fact revolves round a study of his coins. It may be noted that Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād is the first Bengal Muslim ruler whose coins have come to light.

The coins so far discovered, however, fall between the years 616 and 621 H. (1219—1224 A.C.), that is the earliest known issue commences from the 6th year of his rule, while the latest known issue is dated three years before the close of it. The latter gap may be explained by the fact that the Delhi Sultān Iltutmish led an expedition against him in 622 H. (1225 A.C.) and made him stop issuing an independent coinage.<sup>1</sup> The gap at the beginning of the rule might as well be ascribed simply to the

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, p. 90.

non-discovery of all his coins; but there are certain peculiarities on his hitherto discovered coins which have evoked various assumptions. Thus, on the earliest known issue dated 616 H. (1219) there occur on the reverse, besides the *Kalima*, the specific date, 19 Šafar, and on the obverse appear the titles *Sultān* and "Helper of the Commander of the Faithful".<sup>1</sup> This mention of specific date on the coin is very special, indicating clearly that it was in all likelihood a commemorative issue; while the titles show that Ghiyāth al-Dīn sought to strengthen his position by associating himself in some way with the *Khalīfā*. Yet on another of his coins dated 617 or 619 H. he specifies the month, Rabīʿ II, and inserts the name of the *Khalīfā*, Al-Nāṣir li-Dīn-Allah, on the reverse, and on the obverse adds to his name and title the mention of the crown prince.<sup>2</sup> Again on another type, dated 621 H. (1223-24) he enlarges his titles on the obverse as "*Qasīm Amīr al-Mu'minīn*" (partner of the commander of the Faithful) and *Sultān al-Salātīn* (Sultān of the Sultāns), followed by an expression which, according to Thomas would mean a sanction or investiture by the *Khalīfā*, but according to Hoernle and Wright would mean the appointment of another person by the "Helper of the Commander of the Faithful", i.e., by 'Iwād.<sup>3</sup>

While these in general are the main peculiarities of 'Iwād's coins discovered so far, there have been found at the same time a number of coins in Bihar and Assam bearing Ilṭutmish's name which, interestingly enough, fill the gaps in respect of dates in the former's coins noted above. The earlier of these coins bearing Ilṭutmish's name and found in Assam form a distinct type, called "Horseman type", and are dated between 614 and 616 (1217 and 1219 A.C.). They thus cover the earlier part of 'Iwād's

<sup>1</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 354, No. 4; 1929 N.S., 27; and H.N. Wright, *Cat. II.*, 145, No. 2.

(السلطان الأعظم غياث الدنيا والدين أبو الفتح عوض بن الحسين ناصر أمير المؤمنين).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, also *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 356. The name and title reads as follows:

السلطان الأعظم غياث الدنيا والدين أبو الفتح عوض بن الحسين ناصر أمير المؤمنين وولي عهده علاء الحق والدين.

<sup>3</sup> The different readings of the expression are:

في الدنيا والدين أبو المظفر على يده أمير المؤمنين  
and معز الدنيا والدين أبو المظفر على يد ناصر أمير المؤمنين

rule. Moreover, on one such coin, which is of gold, there is the mention of the mint-town which Thomas reads as *Darb ba-Gaur* (minted at Gaud). The other coins bearing Ilutmish's name and found in Bihar form a different type and are dated between 622 and 624 H. (1225 and 1227 A.C.), thus covering the latter end of 'Iwad's rule. On the obverse of these coins appear the *Kalima* and the name of the Khalifa, and on the reverse the name of Sultān Ilutmish, thus bearing a close resemblance with 'Iwad's coins mentioned above.

On the basis of these coins Edward Thomas, the pioneer scholar in this field, made the following suggestions: that for the first few years of his rule Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwad Khalijī owed allegiance to the reigning Delhi Sultān Ilutmish and issued coins in his name (the Horsemen type found in Assam), at least one of which bears the mint-name Gaud, 'Iwad's capital; that from 616 H. (1219) 'Iwad assumed independence and the title of Sultān and issued coins in his own name, seeking to strengthen his independent position by invoking the Khalifa's name on the coins. By 617 'Iwad announced the crown prince on his coins and by 620 (1223) adopted the greater title of *Sultān al-Salātīn* and also, according to the expression on the coin issued in that year, received the sanction or investiture by the Khalifa. Finally, however, after Ilutmish's expedition against him 'Iwad was obliged to drop his name from the coinage and issued it in Ilutmish's name retaining the *Kalima* and the Khalifa's name on it (the second category of Ilutmish's coins found in Bihar).<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent scholars generally accepted Thomas's conclusions about 'Iwad's having early in his rule owed allegiance to the Delhi Sultān, though they pointed out that the coins bearing Ilutmish's name and found in Bihar and Assam might have been carried there by merchants and soldiers, that the mint-name on the gold coin in question might be read as "Lakur" or Nagor (Birbhum district), and that the Horsemen type was not popular in Bengal.<sup>2</sup> It was Dr. Qanungo who suggested for the first time that 'Iwad did not at first owe allegiance to the Delhi Sultān.

<sup>1</sup> E. Thomas, "Initial coinage of Bengal", Part II, *J.A.S.B.*, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> R. Hoernle in *J.A.S.B.*, 1881, 70; Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History*, 213.

Qanungo's reasons are, briefly, that if 'Iwād "cared to acknowledge the overlordship of Delhi he would have associated the name of the Delhi ruler with his own" on the coins, that 'Alī Mardān having previously asserted independence 'Iwād merely stepped into that independent status, that no mint-town is mentioned on 'Iwād's coins and that in any case "Lakhnōr or Nagor" was never a mint-town.<sup>1</sup> Qanungo accepts, however, the theory of investiture by the Khalīfā and states that 'Iwād was not "insensible to the defect in his title" and therefore "anticipated Ilṭutmish" by seeking and obtaining investiture "from the Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir".

Thus Qanungo discards one part of Thomas's view by falling back on the other part. Qanungo's reasons are not, however, convincing. If there is no coin bearing the joint-names of Ilṭutmish and 'Iwād, there is also no coin bearing 'Iwād's sole name prior to 616 H. The fact that no mint-name appears on 'Iwād's own coins does not necessarily prove that it could not have been mentioned on any earlier issue. On the contrary it would be reasonable to assume that 'Iwād mentioned it when he issued coins in Ilṭutmish's name to distinguish them from those issued from other parts of the Delhi Sultanat. Similarly, since the reading of the mint-name as "Lakur" or "Nagor" is far from definite, it is no use arguing that the latter place was never a mint-town. Further, Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād did not peacefully and normally succeed to the throne of a stabilized state. He captured power as a reaction to 'Alī Mardān's policies and in continuation of the struggle for succession which had started since Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death. It would therefore be an oversimplification of the situation to state that by violently overthrowing 'Alī Mardān 'Iwād simply inherited an independent status. On the contrary, considering the fact that the first few years of his rule were occupied in consolidating his position and in warding off the aggressiveness of the Gāṅga ruler of Orissa in the south-west, it would be more reasonable to think that 'Iwād did not take any overt or covert step which might alienate the Delhi ruler, particularly as we know that on two previous occasions 'Iwād had

<sup>1</sup> H.B. II., 19, 25, 26, 28, 39, 40.

been careful not to rush to a confrontation with the Delhi authorities. Finally, if 'Iwad had assumed independence from the beginning, Iltutmish would not definitely have deferred marching against him till almost the end of his reign. As will be seen presently, 'Iwad's hitherto discovered independent coins cover in fact a period of troubles for Iltutmish, indicating that probably that situation prompted the former to assume independence and that when the troubles were over Iltutmish did not delay in marching against 'Iwad.

The latest shift in the process of discussion on Thomas's conclusions takes place at the hand of Dr. Dani who challenges the theory of investiture by the Khalifa by falling back on Qanungo's contention about 'Iwad's inherited independence.<sup>1</sup> This view of Qanungo, as already pointed out, is far from conclusive. Dr. Dani rightly points out, however, that if 'Iwad had received any investiture from the Khalifa, that important fact would have been mentioned by the contemporary historian Minhāj. Dr. Dani's other arguments are not however free from difficulties. Thus, quoting Dr. I.H. Qureshi's observation that there are "instances of rulers owing allegiance to the Caliph and not receiving recognition from him"<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Dani points out that Iltutmish in fact received the Khalifa's investiture on 22 Rabī' I, 626 (9 Feb. 1228), whereas the coins bearing Iltutmish's name and found in Bihar are dated between 622 and 624 H. "This difference in date shows that Iltutmish began to use the name of the Khalifa on the coins before he actually received the investiture."<sup>3</sup> Obviously the conclusion would hold ground if it is first established that the coins in question were issued by Iltutmish. On this basic point, however, Dr. Dani is not sure in his opinion and writes: "It cannot be definitely said whether the coins of Iltutmish were issued by 'Iwad or not,... but their origin can be traced more correctly from Bengal than from Ghazni. It may also be concluded that the invoking of the name of the Khalifa on the coins of 'Iwad led Iltutmish to copy likewise. And probably this invocation induced

<sup>1</sup> A.H. Dani, "Did Ghiyath-ud-din Iwad Khalji of Bengal receive investiture from the Khalifa?", *J.N.S.I.*, XVI, 1954, 243-252 (p. 244).

<sup>2</sup> *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, 26, quoted in *ibid.*, 246.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

him to seek later on the actual recognition from the Khalifa. If Iltutmish could invoke the name of the Khalifa before actually getting recognition from him, could 'Iwad not do the same?'<sup>1</sup> Now, if it is not certain that Iltutmish issued the coins in question, how could it be "concluded" that he copied the instance of 'Iwad; and, again, if Iltutmish copied from 'Iwad, is it not arguing in a circle to suggest that in invoking the Khalifa's name on his coin 'Iwad followed the example of Iltutmish? If the origin of the coins (bearing Iltutmish's name) can be more correctly traced to Bengal, that is to the type of coins issued by 'Iwad invoking the Khalifa's name, is it not more logical to suppose, as Thomas has done, that after he was forced to stop issuing coins in his name 'Iwad substituted Iltutmish's name for his own and continued the coinage with the name of the Khalifa on it as he had been doing previously?<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact an answer to the question whether 'Iwad invoked the Khalifa's name on the coins with the latter's sanction or without it does not really help us in forming a definite opinion about 'Iwad's status at the beginning of his rule. If he had sought the Khalifa's recognition it was not for severing connection with Delhi but for strengthening his independent status which, according to Thomas, he assumed in 616/1219 or, according to Qanungo, he inherited from 'Alī Mardān. The latter view, as discussed above, raises more questions than it solves. In the absence of any positive evidence, therefore, it is better to state only the facts that are indisputable. 'Alī Mardān had come to Bengal with a formal appointment from Qutb al-Dīn but on the latter's death had assumed independence. Shortly afterwards Iltutmish securely placed himself on the Delhi throne and by 1212 succeeded in completely subduing his rivals. In the following year, 1213,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> The rest of Dr. Dani's discussion is more or less a recapitulation of the points raised previously by others regarding the reading of the mint-name as Lakur or Nagor, the reading of the legend on 'Iwad's coin which Thomas supposes to mean an investiture by the Khalifa but which according to others did not carry such a meaning, and the alleged unpopularity of the Horseman type of coins in Bengal. Dr. Dani accepts this latter interpretation and states that it meant not the appointment of 'Iwad by the Khalifa, but that of another person, Mu'izz al-Dīn, by the helper of the Amir al-Muminin, i.e., by 'Iwad. No explanation is offered however about the identity of that other person or the need for his association with the coin in question.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwāḍ effected a revolution against 'Alī Mardān and captured power. Whether this was done with any direct or indirect support from the Delhi Sultān is not known, nor do we know anything definite about 'Iwāḍ's attitude during the initial years of his rule towards Iltutmish. The latter did not, however, think it necessary to lead any expedition against Bengal though he was then quite free to do so. During the first few years 'Iwāḍ was busy in consolidating his hard-earned position and in warding off the Gāṅga aggressiveness in the south-west. By the time he had successfully accomplished both these tasks Sultān Iltutmish fell into absorbing troubles with the Khwārizm Shāh and the Mongol threat from the north-west. The earliest known coin of 'Iwāḍ is dated about that time (19 Safar, 616) which is clearly a commemorative issue and on which he assumes the title of *Sultān* and describes himself as "Helper of the Commander of the Faithful". On subsequent issues 'Iwāḍ assumed a still bigger title and inscribed the Khalīfa's name. Whether he did so on getting an investiture from the latter is nowhere clearly mentioned. The fact that 'Iwāḍ invoked the Khalīfa's name shows that he ('Iwāḍ) sought to give an appearance of legality to his status which, under the circumstances, must have been a new development, for no other immediate cause for such invocation of the Khalīfa's name is discernible. The specific date so prominently mentioned on the coin of 616 H. might have been that of his assumption of open independence, or of the title of Sultān, or of the transfer of the capital from Deokot to Lakhnawatī, or, likelier still, a simultaneous commemoration of all the three events together.

#### IV: MAIN ASPECTS OF 'IWAD'S RULE

The reign of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwāḍ is important in a number of ways. It marked the end of the struggle for succession which had ensued after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death. As already pointed out, 'Iwāḍ is also the first Muslim ruler in Bengal whose coins have come to light. These coins indicate a gradual enlargement of the titles from *Sultān al-Mu'azzam* (616/1219) to *Sultān al-A'zam* (in 617/1220) and finally to *Sultān al-Salātīn* (621/1223). Moreover these coins reveal his acceptance of the theoretical and legal

supremacy of the Khalifa over all Muslim dominions. This is very significant, for apart from Muḥammad bin Sām, he was the first Muslim ruler in the south Asian subcontinent to do so. Last but not least, 'Iwad's rule of about fifteen years also witnessed appreciable expansion as well as consolidation of the Muslim dominion in Bengal.

Speaking about 'Iwad's military exploits Minhāj writes: "On the whole Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khajī was a person of good manners, just disposition and princely qualities. The neighbouring kingdoms of Lakhnawātī such as Jāznagar (Orissa), the territories of Bang (eastern Bengal), Kāmṛūp (Assam) and Tīrhut (north Bihar) all sent him tributes in wealth. And he recovered (literally cleared) the territory of Lakhnor (Birbhum); and elephants and immense wealth and treasures fell into his hands; and he posted his own Amīrs there."<sup>1</sup> Thus the contemporary historian refers to 'Iwad's relationship with the neighbouring or frontier states of Bang, Jāznagar Kāmṛūp and Tīrhut on the one hand, and his "clearing" of the territory of Lakhnor from the hands of enemies on the other. We know that following Ikhtiyār al-Dīn's death the governor of Lakhnor, Muḥammad Shīrān, had left his headquarters and had come to Deokot in his bid to capture power. After his departure from Lakhnor, and most probably during the troublous period that followed, the Gānga ruler of Orissa (Anangabhīma III) or one of his generals<sup>2</sup> had advanced upto Lakhnor and occupied it. Hostilities with Orissa were no new developments; they were rather a legacy from the Senas who had been engaged in prolonged conflicts with the Gāngas of Orissa over the possession of the south-western districts. After consolidating his position at Deokot Ghiyāth al-Dīn marched against the Gāngas in 611/1214 and, as Minhāj records, cleared the area of Lakhnor of the enemies.

<sup>1</sup> Minhāj, 163. The text runs as follows:

في الحملة غياث الدين خلجي مردی باختر و عدل نیکوسیرت پادشاهی بود اطراف ممالک لکهنوی چنانچه جازنگر و بلادینگ و کام رود و ترهت جمله اورا اموال فرستند و بلاد لکهنور اورا صاف شد و بیلان و اموال و خزائن بسیار بدست آورد امراء خود انتخابشاند.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Chakravarty (*J. A. S. B.*, LXII, 1903, 109) and following him Dr. Qanungo (*H. B.* II, 22) assume that 'Iwad fought against Vislmu, a general of the Gānga ruler whose war with the "moon of the Yavana kingdom" is mentioned in the Chhatreswara Inscription (see *J. A. S. B.*, 1898, 317-327).



The historian's statement that much treasure and wealth fell into 'Iwad's hands indicates that besides recovering the territory previously held by the Muslims he had advanced well into the Gānga territory. Probably the Muslim army advanced beyond the river Damodar in the Bankura district upto Katasin (modern Bishnupur) which is mentioned by Minhāj as the next frontier outpost. Also, the statement that the kingdom of Jāznagar paid tributes to Ghiyāth al-Dīn might mean that the Gānga ruler concluded a treaty of peace by offering money and presents.

No details about 'Iwad's relationship with Bang, Kāmrūp and Tīrhut are available except Minhāj's statement that they paid tributes. Whether this was as a result of any expeditions against them, or whether they just wanted to keep the powerful Muslim ruler at bay by sending him suitable presents, cannot be definitely stated. Minhāj mentions elsewhere that 'Iwad built a flotilla of war-boats.<sup>1</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that this flotilla was intended to be used for some expedition against the riverine tracts of the east. Both the kingdoms of Kāmrūp and Tīrhut were about that time disintegrating into a number of petty chieftaincies. It is therefore not unlikely that some of the frontier chiefs sought to pacify the Muslim ruler by sending him tributes or presents. On the whole it is clear that Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwad was able to make his authority felt by the neighbouring kingdoms.

The frontier states mentioned by Minhāj enable us to form an idea about the extent of the Muslim dominion under Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwad. The kingdom of Kāmrūp (Assam) lay to the east of the river Brahmaputra, whereas Tīrhut comprised the northern strip of Bihar. Jāznagar is coterminous with Orissa, and although its jurisdiction then extended over some south-western districts of Bengal, Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwad had extended the Muslim sway at least upto the Damodar river in the Burdwan district. As the next scene of Muslim expansion in that direction was the district of Hugli, this identification of the south-western limit of the Lakhnawatī dominion may be accepted as fairly correct. The kingdom of Bang, which lay to the east, was in fact the circumscribed territory of the Sena ruler, then having his capital at

<sup>1</sup> Minhāj, 74.

Vikrampur, a few miles to the south-east of modern Dacca. This Sena territory did not extend beyond the district of Dacca and the eastern parts of Barisal and Faridpur districts. There appears to be no basis for the assumption that the district of Nadia, the territory originally conquered by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn had either been abandoned by him or recovered by the Sena ruler.<sup>1</sup> Had that been the case it would have been recovered by 'Iwād and that fact would have been mentioned by Minhāj, as he does with regard to Lakhnōr. By excluding these frontier territories of Bang, Kām-rūp, Tirhut and Jāznagar it may be stated that the Muslim dominion under 'Iwād comprised, besides southern Bihar, a compact and fairly extensive area in Bengal embracing the modern districts of Malda, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra and Rajshahi in the north, the districts of Murshidabad, Pabna, Nadia and northern Jessore in the south and those of Birbhum and Burdwan in the south-west.

By far the more important work of Ghiyāth al-Dīn was his various measures for consolidation of the Muslim power in Bengal. One of his earliest acts was the transfer (or rather retransfer) of capital from Deokot to Lakhnawatī (Gaud) in Malda district. It may be recalled that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn had on the eve of his Tibet expedition removed his headquarters from Lakhnawatī to Deokot. This transfer was made for facilitating the Tibet expedition, not to avert any surprise land or river attack by a Hindu Rājā, as has been suggested by a modern writer.<sup>2</sup> Conversely it is also not correct that 'Iwād decided to return to Lakhnawatī because he now felt secure to do so by having built a flotilla of war-boats.<sup>3</sup> Ikhtiyār al-Dīn died almost immediately after his return from the Tibet expedition, while his lieutenants were too busy in the struggle for succession to turn their attention to a return to Lakhnawatī. Now that the struggle was over it was only natural on 'Iwād's part to fix a suitable and permanent capital. The date of the transfer is not on record, but it seems pretty certain that it was done either on the eve or shortly after his

<sup>1</sup> *H.B.*, II, 23, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> 'Iwād built the flotilla of war-boats much later in his reign, most probably in connection with his war with Bang, after the transfer of the capital to Lakhnawatī.

successful expedition against the Gāngas in 611/1214. The site of Lakhnawatī (Gaud) had been the capitals of some ancient dynasties including the Pālas whose kingdom included parts of Bihar and north, west and central Bengal. Now that the Muslim dominion embraced almost precisely the same territories the site naturally suggested itself as the capital. At any rate its central location<sup>1</sup> and the facility of communication from there by land and water with Bihar on the one hand and with the different parts of Bengal on the other were the main considerations behind its selection as capital. 'Iwad built entirely a new city on the site where there was practically no building or construction worth the name. As Minhāj tells us, 'Iwad built numerous beautiful buldings and the nobles who moved there also erected their own residential quarters. The river then flowed by the west of the city. Later accounts and archaeological evidence suggest that 'Iwad enclosed the other three sides of the capital by a high earthen rampart, "the top of the wall or embankment being covered with buildings".<sup>2</sup> Minhāj further informs us that in order to protect the city and its suburbs from the annual floods 'Iwad constructed a series of dykes with arched bridges which, in the rainy seasons, served as means of communication with the adjoining region. For the defence of the capital 'Iwad also built a separate fort-town adjacent to the main city, called Baskot or Basankot.<sup>3</sup> For defence as well as for administrative purposes the capital was connected with the outlying towns of Deokot, about 70 miles to the north-east, and Lakhnor, some 85 miles to the south-west, by a high embanked road with ferries on the Ganges and other rivers. This road, running for more than 150 miles, proved to be one of the most notable beneficial measures of 'Iwad which gave a great impetus to internal trade and protected the whole region against floods. The road survived down to the last quarter of the nineteenth century when A. Cunningham made his famous archaeological tour through the region and noted that it was "80 to 100 feet in

<sup>1</sup> The ruins of Laknawati stand on a deserted channel of the Ganges at 24° 33' north latitude and 88° 14' east longitude.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs*, 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Minhaj*, 151.

breadth and four to five feet in height."<sup>1</sup>

Equally important was 'Iwād's measures for the promotion of Islam in the country. Whether the theory of his investiture by the Khalīfa of Baghdad is correct or not, there is no doubt that by invoking the latter's name on the coins and by describing himself as the "Helper of the Commander of the Faithful" 'Iwād sought as much to strengthen his own position as to get recognition for the newly established Muslim dominion in Bengal as part and parcel of the greater body-politic of Islam. He was the pioneer in this respect among the Muslim rulers in south Asia and the practice thus initiated by him was continued by his successors even after the *Khilāfat* at Baghdad had come to an end.<sup>2</sup> To advance the cause of Islam 'Iwād also extended his patronage to men of learning and built a number of *Jāmi'* and other mosques. "He gave pensions to good men among the 'Ulamā', the Mashāikh, and the Sayyids", as Minhāj puts it, "and other people received much wealth from his bounty and munificence"<sup>3</sup> It is also recorded that when a renowned Islamic scholar and preacher of the day, Jalāl al-Dīn ibn Jamāl al-Dīn Ghaznawī of Firozkoh visited Lakhnawati 'Iwād invited him to deliver a lecture at the audience hall. At the end of the lecture the Sultān, and at his instance his nobles and ministers made such liberal presents to the scholar that at the time of his return he amassed a sum of ten thousand gold and silver *tankas*.<sup>4</sup>

Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād's reign of independence was disturbed by the intervention of the Delhi Sultān Ilṭutmish in 622/1225. So long the latter had been busy in warding off the Khawārizm and Mongol threat from the north-west. In 618/1221 the terrible Chengiz Khān advanced upto the Panjab in pursuit of Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārizm Shāh, but after having defeated him withdrew from there. Jalāl al-Dīn, in his turn, defeated Naṣīr al-Dīn Qabacha, Ilṭutmish's rival, and then left the Panjab for Persia in 621/1224.

<sup>1</sup> A. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India* (Report of a tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879-80), XV, Calcutta, 1882, 44.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Karim, "The Khalīfa as recognised in the coins of Bengal Sultāns", *J.N.S.I.*, VII, Pt. II, 1955, 86-91. Also *infra*, pp.691-692.

<sup>3</sup> *Minhāj*, 161-162.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

Being thus relieved of the Mongol and Khwārizm pressure Iltutmish marched towards the east in 622/1225 in order to bring the Lakhnawatī ruler under his control. Whether any actual armed confrontation took place between the two is not on record. Minhāj informs us that a treaty was concluded between Iltutmish and 'Iwād according to which the latter paid an indemnity of eighty lakhs of *tankas* and 38 elephants, acknowledged the Delhi Sultān's authority and undertook to read the *khutba* and issue coins in his name.<sup>1</sup> Iltutmish then put Bihar in charge of 'Alā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd Jānī and returned to Delhi. From this date the coinage of 'Iwād ceases to appear and, as already mentioned, we get a new type of Iltutmish's coins resembling those of 'Iwād. Ghiyāth al-Dīn could not however reconcile himself with the loss of Bihar and shortly after Iltutmish's departure expelled 'Alā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd Jānī from that place. At this Iltutmish sent his son prince Nāṣir al-Dīn apparently to deal with a Hindu chief of Oudh but really to put down 'Iwād. Prince Nāṣir al-Dīn, joined by 'Alā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd Jānī, suddenly marched upon Lakhnawatī when 'Iwād was away on an expedition towards Bang at the beginning of 624/1227. He hurriedly returned from the campaign and fought a pitched battle with the Delhi forces near Lakhnawatī but was defeated, captured and beheaded along with some of his principal nobles. Thus came to an end the otherwise significant and constructive regime of Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād. He was by far the ablest of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār's lieutenants who contributed most to the consolidation of Muslim rule in Bengal.

<sup>1</sup> *Minhāj*, 163-64, 171.

## CHAPTER V

### CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION

The period from Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād's death in 624/1227 till the establishment of the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty in the middle of the following century was one of steady expansion and consolidation. For the first half of this period the Lakhnawatī territory was ruled by governors either appointed by the Delhi Sultān or owing allegiance to him. With the Khaljī take-over of the Delhi Sultānat in 689/1290 Prince Bughrā Khān, Balban's son, established a new line of rulers in Benegal who continued to rule independently of Delhi till the Tughlaq intervention in 724/1324. The Tughlaq hold over Bengal was only short-lived and was ended first by the assumption of independence by one of their officials, Fakhr al-Dīn, at Sunārgāon (Dacca) and ultimately by the rise of the Ilyās Shāhīs. Throughout the period, however, the Muslim dominion in Bengal grew in strength and extent and towards the end emerged as a well-organized and strong unit of the then Muslim world. Its stability and importance were ensured in a large measure by its aloofness from the military and political upheavals that had overtaken the Central Asian heartland of Islam about that time. Even the north-western region of the subcontinent including Delhi, the new Muslim capital, was not quite out of the range of those troubles. One of the consequences of this situation was that throughout this period groups of Muslim adventurers, political fugitives, scholars and others continued to find their way into Bengal. Even dynastic and political changes at Delhi occasioned the flight or expulsion of the ousted groups to the eastern dominion. These immigrant Muslims played an important part in building up the Muslim dominion in Bengal. Indeed the political force generated by the influx of these new elements led to the rise of the Ilyās Shāhīs.

#### I: LAKHNAWATĪ DOMINION UNDER THE DELHI SULTĀNAT

Prince Nāṣir al-Dīn, who succeeded 'Iwād, united his original province of Oudh with Bengal and Bihar and fixed his residence at Lakhnawatī. This enlargement of his jurisdiction and the fact of his being the son of the Delhi Sultān naturally increased

the importance of the eastern Muslim dominion in contemporary eyes; but it created a tradition of involvement on the part of the Lakhnawatī ruler in north Indian politics which, in the long run, did not prove helpful for the growth of Muslim power in Bengal itself. Prince Nāsir al-Dīn ruled the combined territory for a year and a half continuing the policy of consolidation and promotion of the cause of Islam by a liberal patronage of the 'ulamā', the *shaikhs* and the *Sayyids*. In the meantime Sultān Iltutmish had sought and obtained recognition and a robe of investiture from the 'Abbāsīd Khalīfa Al-Mansūr Billah, which arrived at Delhi in Rabī'ī 626/ February 1229. The Sultān sent a robe of honour out of the *khil'at* sent by the Khalīfa, a red umbrella and a red canopy to Prince Nāsir al-Dīn, and also bestowed upon him the title of *Malik al-Sharq* (King of the East). The latter could not however long enjoy these dignity and honours, for shortly afterwards he fell ill and died in May 1229.

On Nāsir al-Dīn's death Malīk Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Balka Khaljī, a partisan of 'Iwad's, assumed the reins of government at Lakhnawatī and issued coins in 627/1230 in the joint-names of himself and Iltutmish, describing himself as *Daulat Shāh bin Maudūd*. This did not, however, satisfy the Delhi Sultān who immediately led an expedition against him and defeated and killed him. Malīk 'Alā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd Jānī, who had been governor of Bihar under Prince Nāsir al-Dīn, was now put in charge of Lakhnawatī. Bihar was placed under a separate governor, Malīk Saif al-Dīn Aibak. For some reasons, however, Malīk 'Alā' al-Dīn Jānī was transferred from Lakhnawatī only after one year and Malīk Saif al-Dīn Aibak was placed over it. Tughral Tughan Khān, governor of Badayun, was transferred to Bihar (630/1232). Malīk Saif al-Dīn Aibak ruled over Lakhnawatī for a little more than three years during which period he is said to have led an expedition against Bang. The exact direction of the expedition is not on record, but it seems to have been attended with success, for he captured a number of elephants which he sent as present to Sultān Iltutmish. The latter was so pleased with this present that he conferred upon Saif al-Dīn the title of *Yughan Tat*. Sultān Iltutmish died on 20 Sha'bān 633/29 April 1236. Shortly after-

wards Saif al-Dīn Aibak also died at Lakhnawatī in the same year.

On Siaf al-Dīn's death one of his companions, Aor Khān, assumed power at Lakhnawatī. He was challenged in his position, however, by the Bihar governor Ṭughrāl Tughan Khān who marched against him and defeated and killed him in battle. Ṭughrāl then became the master of the united territory of Lakhnawatī and Bihar. He legalised his position by obtaining recognition from Sultāna Rāḍiyah who had in the meantime succeeded to the Delhi throne. The latter sent him the princely insignia and an umbrella, a red canopy and standards of authority. On his part Ṭughrāl remained steadfast in his loyalty to the Delhi Sultān, reading *khutba* and issuing coins in the latter's name, and sending presents and protestations of loyalty whenever a new Sultān succeeded to the throne of Delhi.

Ṭughrāl Tughan Khān was a man of undoubted ability and manly qualities. "He was adorned with all sorts of humanity and sagacity", writes Minhāj, "and graced with many virtues and noble qualities; and in liberality, generosity and power of winning men's hearts, he had no equal".<sup>1</sup> During his rule of about nine years, however, the north Indian involvement became manifest. Thus, instead of seeking an expansion of territories towards the east and south-west of Bengal Ṭughrāl sought to emulate Prince Nāsir al-Dīn and bring Oudh and the adjoining region of north India under his control. With this end in view he recruited a large army of horse and infantry and considerably expanded the flotilla of war-boats. With this grand army he made a successful dash first into Tirhut (north Bihar) and then proceeded towards the west at the beginning of 640/Sept. 1242. He was encouraged to do this by the confusions over succession at Delhi following Sultāna Rāḍiyah's death (638/1240). Ṭughrāl advanced as far as Kara (near modern Allahabad) where he got the news of the accession of Sultān Mas'ūd Shāh at Delhi. In the meantime taking advantage of his absence in north India the Orissa ruler Rājā Narasimhadeva I (son and successor of Anangabhīma III) advanced from the south-west as far as Lakhnor and started ravaging the country.

<sup>1</sup> Minhāj, (tr.), 736.



From Kara, therefore, Ṭughral sent his envoy, Sharaf al-Mulk al-'Ash'arī, to Delhi with presents and expressions of loyalty and retraced his steps towards Lakhnawātī. Sultān Mas'ūd Shāh was too weak to question Ṭughral's proceedings and confirmed him in his post by sending him, through Qādī Jalāl al-Dīn Kashānī, an umbrella, a red canopy of state and a *khil'at*. Ṭughral returned to Lakhnawātī on 17 Dhu al-Hijja 640/7 June 1243 accompanied by the historian Minhāj-i-Sirāj from Kara. Shortly afterwards the Sultān's envoy accompanied by Ṭughral's envoy reached Lakhnawātī. Ṭughral was invested with the *khil'at* on 11 Rabī I 691/29 August 1243. Before that event, however, Ṭughral had already assumed the title of *Mughīth al-Mulūk wa al-Salātīn* (Helper of Kings and Sultāns) etc.<sup>1</sup>

The north Indian adventure of Ṭughral, instead of bringing any tangible benefit to Muslim Bengal, occasioned a temporary eclipse of Muslim power in the south-western region. The advance of the Orissa forces there under Narasimhadeva was clearly a move on the part of the latter to retrieve the loss of territory and prestige caused by 'Iwad's conquests upto Katasin and exaction of tributes from the former's father.<sup>2</sup> Ṭughral marched against the Orissans in Dhu al-Qa'dah, 641/April, 1244 and pushed them beyond Katasin, some seventy miles south of Lakhnor. It appears that he had been lured well inside the Orissa territory, for suddenly he was attacked from the rear and had to beat a hasty retreat. The Orissa army occupied Lakhnor and killed its governor Fakhr al-Mulūk Karīm al-Dīn Langhrī. Under the circumstances Ṭughral sent Sharaf al-Mulk al-'Ash'arī and Qādī Jalāl al-Dīn Kashānī to Delhi seeking military assistance from the Sultān. Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd at once ordered the governors of Kara-Manikpur (Allahabad) and Oudh, Malik Qara Qash Khān

<sup>1</sup> Bihar Sharif Inscription of Ṭughral dated Muḥarram, 640/1242, J.A.S.B., 1873, 245-246; E. M., 1913-14, 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 85-86. Incidentally, this shows that 'Iwad had actually fought against the Orissa ruler Anangabhimā III, and not simply against one of his "feudatories." Dr. Qanungo states (*H.B.*, II, 48) that Narasimhadeva advanced through Nadia which "was strewn with semi-independent Hindu rajas" who welcomed the "mighty Hindu power of Orissa" as their "only safeguard against the rapacity of the Turks". There is no direct evidence to support this statement. It is also somewhat inconsistent with his earlier statement in the same chapter (*ibid.*, 43) that the period witnessed the beginning of rapprochement "between the conquerors and their Hindu subjects."

and Malīk Tamar Khān respectively, to unite their forces and proceed to Ṭughral's assistance. In the meantime the Orissa forces made further advance into the Muslim territory and reached even the vicinity of Lakhnawātī on 13 Shawwāl 642/14 March 1245. On the following day, however, news was received of the arrival of reinforcements from north India and the Orissa army hurriedly withdrew. As there was no encounter between the combined Muslim army and the Orissa forces, and as the next scene of military operations by the Lakhnawātī ruler about eight years afterwards relates to Madāran (Hugli), well to the south of Lakhnor (Birbhum), in fact even to the south of Burdwan which intervenes between Birbhum and Hugli, it may be assumed that the Orissa forces withdrew well within their own territory. At any rate there seems to be no valid basis for the assumption made by some writers that the Orissa king kept Lakhnor and the adjoining region under his control<sup>1</sup>.

Ṭughral was not however left alone by the north Indian governors. As soon as the Orissa forces had withdrawn the Oudh governor Malīk Tamar Khān pressed Ṭughral Khān for relinquishing the charge of the Lakhnawātī province to him (Tamar Khān) and invested the capital. After some days of skirmishing Tamar Khān inflicted a defeat upon Ṭughral and forced him to take shelter within the city. After some further stray fightings Minhāj-i-Sirāj, the historian, negotiated a peace between the two whereby Ṭughral surrendered Lakhnawātī and Bihar to Tamar Khān and in return was allowed to depart unmolested with his treasures and followers. Minhāj-i-Sirāj and the Oudh governor Malik Qara Qash Khān also left Lakhnawātī along with Ṭughral. The latter reached Delhi on 14 Šafar 643/11 July 1245. Sultān Mas'ūd was too weak to interfere with Tamar Khān's arrogation of the Lakhnawātī governorship. Shortly afterwards, however, 'Alā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd Shāh was succeeded on the Delhi throne by Nāṣir al-Dīn Mahmūd (the younger). He appointed Ṭughral to Tamar Khān's former province of Oudh; but shortly after his arrival there Ṭughral died on 23 Muḥarram 644/10 June 1246.

<sup>1</sup> See for instance M. Chakravarti, *J.A.S.B.*, 1903, 121 ff; R.D. Banerji, *History of Orissa*, I., Calcutta, 1930, 263 ff.

Curiously enough Tamar Khan also died on the same day at Lakhnawatī.

Malik Jalāl al-Dīn Mas'ūd Jānī, son of 'Alā' al-Dīn Jānī, was now appointed governor of Lakhnawatī. He ruled the territory for at least five years, from 645 to 649 (1247-1251)<sup>1</sup>. No detail about his rule is available. He assumed the dignified title of *Malik al-Sharq* and at the same time remained steadfast in his allegiance to the Delhi Sultān Nāsir al-Dīn. Mas'ūd Jānī also devoted himself to beneficial public works. An inscription of his time found near Malda (Gangarampur) and dated the beginning of Muḥarram 647/April 1249 records the repair of a "sacred place" (البقعة المباركة), most probably a mosque, built previously during the time of Sultān Ilṭutmish.<sup>2</sup>

Early in 649/1251 Mas'ūd Jānī was transferred to Oudh and the governor of the latter place, Malik Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Yūzbak, was appointed to Lakhnawatī. Yūzbak was a partisan of Ulugh Khān Balban, the powerful governor of Badayun and subsequently Sultān of Delhi. Yūzbak's rise seems to be connected with the growth of Balban's influence at the Delhi court. Almost immediately after his assumption of office Yūzbak took up the task of extending the territory in the south-west. A son-in-law of Narasimhadeva of Orissa named Savantar was then posted at Madāran, a few miles to the south-west of Chinsurah in modern Hugli district. Yūzbak's first expedition against Madāran towards the end of 651/1253 was not attended with success. Two years afterwards, however, he led another expedition, defeated Savantar and captured Madāran. Savantar escaped towards the south. Whether Yūzbak followed this success up by further campaigns is not definitely known.

The Delhi Sultānat was about this time once again in trouble. The Oudh governor Mas'ūd Jānī, being jealous of Balban who had at that time been reinstated as the Sultān's minister after a temporary eclipse of power, raised the standard of rebellion; while in the Doab the Meos started creating troubles. Taking advantage of this situation and emboldened by his success at Madāran

<sup>1</sup> See *E.I.M.*, 1913-14, 19-21.

<sup>2</sup> Gangarampur inscription of Mas'ūd Jānī, *E.I.M.*, 1913-14, 19-22.

Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Yūzbak assumed the title of al-Sultān al-A'zam Mughīth al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Yūzbak al-Sultān and struck coins in his name<sup>1</sup>. On behalf of the Delhi Sultān Balban led a campaign against Mas'ūd Jānī of Oudh, drove him out of the province, but did not proceed against Yūzbak either because he belonged to his (Balban's) faction or because the task of suppressing the Meos in the Doab and of repulsing the Mongols who were advancing from the north-west attracted his immediate attention. The expulsion of Mas'ūd Jānī from Oudh and the departure of Balban and his army from there left the field open for Yūzbak who, later in the year (653/1255), advanced with his army and war-boats upon Oudh and had the *khutba* read there in his name. On return to Lakhnawatī he adopted three canopies of state, red, black and white, signifying his authority over the three territories of Lakhnawatī, Bihar and Oudh.

Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak next turned his attention towards the north-east and embarked upon an expedition against Kāmrūp (Assam). The territory was at that time divided into a number of small principalities. The district of Kāmrūp itself with the adjoining region was then under one Koch Hajo. In 655/1257 Yūzbak proceeded along the northern bank of the Barhmaputra into Kāmrūp. Perceiving that a frontal resistance would not be possible, Koch Hajo withdrew from the capital towards the interior of the land and made offers of yearly tributes to Yūzbak. The latter turned down the offer desiring to complete the conquest of the country and decided to stay on in the capital. This was a disastrous mistake on his part; for soon the terrible Assam rains set in and Koch Hajo flooded the surrounding area by damming up the hill streams and cut off supplies. Yūzbak realized his mistake, got hold of a local guide and attempted to withdraw by an alternative route. That guide appears to have acted secretly

<sup>1</sup> Cat. II., 146, No. 6. The coin is dated Ramaḍān, 653 (1255). On the obverse appears the name of the Sultān thus: السلطان الأعظم مغيث الدنيا والدين أبو المظفر يوزبك السلطان

The reverse records the following: in the centre:

في عهد الإمام المستعصم

هذه الضرب بلكنتوي من خراج ارض بدن ونوديا في رمضان سنة ثلث وخمسين  
وستماية.

for Koch Hajo, for Yūzbak and his army soon found themselves in a narrow place under attack from all sides by Koch Hajo's army. Yūzbak fought bravely but was mortally wounded by an arrow-shot to which he succumbed shortly afterwards. The greater part of his army either surrendered or perished. Thus ended in disaster the second Muslim attempt to push the territory in the north-east and the rather meteoric career of Yūzbak.

In spite of this failure, however, Yūzbak is best remembered for the extension of the Muslim dominion in the south-west upto the northern boundary of Howrah district. The Kāmrūp disaster does not seem to have any adverse impact on the Muslim dominion in Bengal; for neither did the Orissans try to regain their lost ground, nor did the Sena ruler of eastern Bengal take advantage of it to press on from that quarter. This fact clearly indicates the extent of consolidation and strength which the Muslim dominion in Bengal had attained during the half a century of its existence.

After Sultān Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak's death one of his fellow-tribesmen, Malik 'Izz al-Dīn Balban Yūzbakī, assumed power at Lakhnawatī. He signified his allegiance to the Delhi Sultān. Early in 657/1259 Mas'ūd Jānī succeeded in obtaining nomination for the governorship of Lakhnawatī for a second time; but Yūzbakī's show of strength and Ulugh Khān Balban's exertions at Delhi resulted in the cancellation of this nomination. Yūzbakī, in return, sent two elephants and other valuable presents as *peshkash* to the Sultān who then sent, in Jamādī II 657/June 1259 his formal recognition and a robe of investiture to 'Izz al-Dīn Yūzbakī. Feeling now secure in his position he undertook an expedition against Bang (east Bengal) and suffered the same fate as had befallen Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī a few years earlier. Taking advantage of Yūzbakī's absence in eastern Bengal Malik Tāj al-Dīn Arslan Khān Sanjar-i-Chishtī, who had just at that time obtained the governorship of Kara (Allahabad region) through Balban's influence at court, marched upon Lakhnawatī and occupied it after overcoming some resistance offered by Yūzbakī's partisans. The latter hurriedly returned from his expedition but it was too late. Nevertheless he gave a battle to Tāj-al-Dīn Arslan

but was defeated and was either killed in battle or was captured and killed.

Tāj al-Dīn Arslan ruled over the Lakhnawatī territory from 657/1259 till most probably 663/1265. We have no detailed record of his activities because Minhāj-i-Sirāj's account stops with the year 658/1260. Nor has hitherto any coin or inscription of Arslan Khān been discovered. He was succeeded by his son Tātār Khān whose Barādari (Bihar Sharif) inscription dated 18 Jamādī I 663/8 March 1265 shows that Bihar as well was within his jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> Tātār Khān explicitly acknowledged the authority of Sultān Balban who succeeded to the Delhi throne in 664/1266 and sent him congratulatory presents including 63 elephants.<sup>2</sup> Tātār Khān died most probably in 666/1268 and was succeeded by Sher Khān, a member of Tāj al-Dīn Arslan Khān's family, who appears to have ruled for four years and died in 670/1272. Sultān Balban then appointed Amīn Khān, governor of Oudh to administer Lakhnawatī in addition to his original province, and associated with him Mughīth al-Dīn Ṭughral as deputy governor. Amīn Khān appears to have remained busy with Oudh affairs, leaving Ṭughral in almost sole control of the Lakhnawatī territory.

## II: MUGHĪTH AL-DĪN ṬUGHRAL AND THE EASTERN PUSH

Ṭughral's greatest achievement was the conquest of east Bengal from the hands of the lingering Sena dynasty and its incorporation into the Muslim dominion. According to Baranī Ṭughral led several expeditions in eastern Bengal and for consolidating his authority there built a strong fort, most probably at Laricol, about 25 miles due south of Dacca. It is referred to by the historian as "Qil'a-i-Ṭughral". No details of Ṭughral's expeditions are however mentioned; but it is clear from subsequent events that he succeeded in bringing under his effective control the Dacca-Faridpur region. Balban, while

<sup>1</sup> The inscription was first published by Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 247; and a revised reading was published by Profesor Yazdani in *E.I.M.*, 1913-14, 24. Its first half with the governor's name is lost. It records the construction of a tomb over the grave of one Sultān Shāh. Neither Blochmann nor Yazdani thinks that the expression Sultān Shāh refers to Arslan Khān. Dr. Qanungo assumes, however, that it means Arslan Khān and that he asserted independence. (*H.B.* II, 56.).

<sup>2</sup> Baranī, *Tārīkh-i-Firūzshāhī*, 53.

subsequently suppressing Tughral's rebellion, looked upon Sunārgāon as a distinct Muslim territory conjoined with Lakhnawatī. Balban also found that the only Hindu chieftain in existence in east Bengal was Danuj Mādhava in Barisal district. He was either a scion or a subordinate of the Sena dynasty, for Baranī refers to him as "Rāi of Sunārgāon". Besides conquering the Sena territory Tughral extended his political and diplomatic influence also over the neighbouring territory of Hill Tippera. It is said that Ratna Fa, a prince of the ruling family of Tippera, sought Tughral's help against his (Ratna Fā's) eldest brother Rājā Fa, who had succeeded to their father's throne. Tughral responded favourably to the request, led a campaign into Tippera and defeated Rājā Fa who was killed in battle, and placed Ratna Fā on the throne. The latter in gratitude "presented Tughral with a *vek-mani* (jewel from a frog's head) and 100 elephants. In return Tughral conferred on Ratna Fā the title of *Mānikya*, which the ruling princes of Tippera have ever since borne"<sup>1</sup>. After these successes in east Bengal Tughral turned his attention to the south-west. It is said that he led a number of campaigns into Jāznagar which, considering the fact that Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbakī had previously captured Madāran (Hugli district), must have been south of that area, that is in the region of Howrah or Bankura-Midnapur. In these campaigns Tughral is said to have captured immense booty in treasure and elephants.

Hitherto Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban had been preoccupied with the Mongol invasions from the north-west for repelling which he had transferred his headquarters from Delhi to Lahore and stayed there for two years. Towards the end of that period he fell seriously ill and a rumour reached Lakhnawatī that he had in fact died. At this news Tughral declared independence in 674/1277 assuming the title of Sultān Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral, issued coins and had the *khutba* read in his name. He also consolidated his position by a profuse distribution of wealth among the principal nobles and citizens of the realm. On being free from the Mongol menace and on his return from Lahore to Delhi Balban attempted

<sup>1</sup> Stapleton in *J.A.S.B.*, 1922, 409, n. 1, quoting the *Rāja Mālā* of Kailaschandra Sinha, a history of Tippera compiled from local records and printed in 1303 B.E./1896.

to bring Tughral back to allegiance by peaceful negotiations and persuasion. That attempt having failed Balban sent an expedition against Tughral in the middle of 676/1278 under Malik Turmatī, governor of Oudh. Tughral met him on the frontier of Tirhut where the two armies remained encamped for sometime. Tughral won over to his side a number of officers of Turmatī's camp by secretly distributing among them a huge amount of money. As a result when the battle took place a large part of Turmatī's army remained inactive or lukewarm and he suffered a disastrous defeat. Balban sent another army in the following year which too was defeated by Tughral. At last Balban decided to march himself against the latter, and advanced towards the east in 678/1280 accompanied by his youngest son Bughra Khān who brought up the rear of the huge army which had been collected for this expedition. It is said that about 300,000 men accompanied Balban in this expedition. The Sultān had also a well-sized flotilla of war-boats constructed for the purpose. Tughral did not dare give a battle to the Sultān and evacuated Lakhnawatī on the latter's approach. In order perhaps to divert Balban's attention from the fort of Laricol in eastern Bengal Tughral withdrew towards Lakhnor in south-west Bengal. Whether Balban proceeded against him in that direction is not clear. After a short stay at Lakhnawatī, however, Balban proceeded towards eastern Bengal evidently because Tughral had escaped there. The city of Lakhnawatī was left in charge of Sipāh Salār Hishām al-Dīn, a maternal grandfather of the historian Baranī. In order to prevent Tughral's escaping by riverways towards the south of Sunārgāon Balban made Rāi Danuj of Barisal enter into an agreement to the effect that he "would be answerable for Tughral if he would take up his position on water or land, or fly by way of water or conceal himself in the water." Thus finding his way of retreat eastward or westward cut off, Tughral evacuated his fort of Larikal and attempted to escape most probably towards Jāznagar. The exact route he took is not on record. Sultān Balban sent an advance division of troops under Malik Bektaurs who was instructed to send out small parties in all directions to secure intelligence about Tughral. One day, one such small party under Malik Sher Andāz



came across a group of merchants, and suspecting that they knew Ṭughral's whereabouts, straightway cut off the heads of two of them in order to frighten the rest into divulging their information. The merchants did indeed know about Ṭughral and being terrified gave out information that the latter was encamped at a distance of about half a *kos* (about a mile) from the spot on the bank of a river. Following this information Malik Sher Andāz and his party secretly proceeded to the spot and all of a sudden fell upon Ṭughral's camp. The latter was completely surprised and thinking that the whole army of Balban was on them tried to escape by swimming across the river, but was mortally wounded by an arrow-shot, caught and beheaded. It appears that Ṭughral had then with him only a small band of followers.

Thus was the rebellion of Ṭughral suppressed. Although he met with a violent end he was a vigorous and capable ruler who brought the Sena rule in eastern Bengal to an end and considerably extended the boundaries of the Muslim dominion towards the east and the south-west. Balban meted out severe retribution upon Ṭughral's supporters and followers. Then, after placing Prince Bughra Khān in charge of the province and granting him the privileges of using the umbrella, *durbash* and other royal insignia, the Sultān and his army left Lakhnawatī early in 681/1282. On the eve of his departure Balban administered much good advice to Bughra Khān and also instructed him to conquer *Diyār-i-Bangāla* meaning, in all likelihood, the remaining portion of eastern Bengal (Barisal and Mymensingh region).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BALBANĪ RULERS

#### 1. PRINCE NĀSIR AL-DĪN BUGHRA KHĀN

With the suppression of Tughral's rebellion and the appointment of Prince Bughra Khān over Bengal a new chapter in its history opened. For about half a century Bughra Khān and other princes of Balban's family ruled in Bengal independently of the Delhi Sultanat. The change in the Bengal Muslim dominion's relationship with the Delhi Sultanat was occasioned by a dynastic change at Delhi. Sultān Balban died shortly after his Bengal expedition and the Khaljīs took over the Delhi Sultanat in 689/1290. In this circumstance Prince Bughra Khān and his successors naturally held themselves aloof from Delhi and evolved an independent policy of their own in the eastern dominion. Their position was strengthened by the influx of other nobles who escaped the Khaljīs' persecution and vengeance. Many of the Ilbarī Turkish nobles ousted from Delhi found shelter in Bengal. It is related that the new Delhi ruler Jalāl al-Dīn Khaljī deported a large number of recalcitrant elements to Bengal. These newcomers contributed their mite in further consolidating the Muslim dominion of Bengal and in extending its territorial limits. The Khaljīs, on the other hand, were much too busy with their own affairs and with the Mongol menace from the north-west. So they found very little time to turn their attention to Bengal. Thus there was an ideal situation for extension of territory towards the east and south-west. Hence the period of the Balbanī rulers in Bengal, as Stapleton rightly points out, was "one of active expansion of Muslim dominion in Bengal, and the adjacent countries." The presence of numerous *shaikhs* and *ghāzīs* who are found to have been instrumental in a large measure during this period in bringing new territories under Muslim sway might be due to some definite policy of the Delhi Sultāns in encouraging the "undesirable" elements to find their way into Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1922, 411, 414. Dr. Qanungo (*H.B.* II., 76, 68) seems to misread Stapleton's remarks in stating that the *shaikhs*, the "warriors in the path of Allah", were not so "degenerate as to act as the Fifth Columnists of one Muslim State against another". No such suggestion can be inferred from Stapleton's remarks quoted above.

Prince Bughra Khān ruled in Bengal for about ten years. Although his activities are not known in detail, it appears that he carried out faithfully his father's instructions to conquer the remaining lands of eastern Bengal; for at the end of his rule the Muslim dominion is found to consist of four distinct divisions. These are Bihar, the Lakhnawatī-Deokot region of north Bengal, the Sātgāon-Hugli region in south-west Bengal and the Sunār-gāon region in east Bengal. Bughra Khān exercised his full control over these territories assisted by his two able lieutenants, both named Fīrūz, one from Delhi and the other from Koh-i-Jūd, whom Balban had left in Bengal for the specific purpose of assisting and advising Bughra Khān.

From the text of Balban's advice to Bughra Khān and from other allusions in the near-contemporary Delhi accounts it would appear that the latter was ease-loving and care-free. From the known facts of his rule, however, he appears to be a capable and prudent person. At least he could perceive the impending trouble at Delhi towards the end of his father's reign. On 3 Dhu al-Hijja Balban's eldest son and heir-apparent Prince Muḥammad Sultān died in a fight with the Mongols in the Panjab. Thereupon Balban summoned Bughra Khān to Delhi. The latter went to Delhi but hesitated to be the heir-apparent there and after a couple of months returned to Lakhnawatī. Clearly he could scent the troubles ahead in view of the selfish machinations of the nobles and considered the Lakhnawatī dominion a far safer and more stable possession. Ultimately Balban nominated as his successor his minor grandson Kāi-Khasru, son of the deceased Prince Muḥammad Sultān (Khān-i-Shahīd). After Balban's death in 686/1287 the ambitious *wazīr* Nizām al-Dīn raised Kaiqobād, Bughra Khān's eldest son, to the throne and arrogated the real authority to himself. At Lakhnawatī Bughra Khān, on coming to know about his father's death and Nizām al-Dīn's machinations assumed the title of Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmud and attempted to persuade his son Kaiqobād, through long correspondence, to extricate himself from the influence of his evil counsellors. When this attempt failed Bughra Khān decided to march upon Delhi and set things right there. He started from Lakhnawatī with his army

and flotilla of boats in the beginning of 687/1288. On the other hand Kaiqobād, advised by Nizām al-Dīn and others, also advanced eastward to oppose his father. The two Sultāns met in Oudh where, contrary to the expectations of the Delhi nobles, respect for father on the one hand and filial affection on the other got the upper hand. Sultan Nāsir al-Dīn Bughra Khān solemnly conducted his son on the throne and did him homage. The happy meeting is described in the *Qiran al-Sa'dain* by poet Amīr Khusrau of Delhi who had accompanied Kaiqobād on that occasion and composed the work at his behest. Thus ended the confrontation between father and son. From the practical point of view there now came into existence two Muslim *Sultanats* of Lakhnawatī and Delhi, one allied with the other. Sultān Nāsir al-Dīn Bughra Khān returned to Lakhnawatī shortly afterwards. On his return to Delhi Kaiqobād did indeed get himself rid to Nizām al-Dīn; but the Khaljīs soon effected a revolution there, put Kaiqobād and his son Kaimurs to death and captured the Delhi throne in 689/1290. Bughra Khān was so much shocked at this tragic news that he either abdicated the throne towards the end of that year or, as Ibn Baṭṭa tells us, died about that time.

## II: SULTĀN RUKN AL-DĪN KĀIKĀ'ŪS (690-701/1290-1301)

Bughra Khān was succeeded on the Lakhnawatī throne by his son Rukn al-Dīn Kāikā'ūs. A number of his coins issued from Lakhnawatī bearing the dates from 690 to 698 have been discovered. These show that he ruled at least for these years. Some of his coins bearing the dates 697 and 698 H. were unearthed at Purinda in Dacca district. His earliest coin dated 690/1291 bears the significant legend: "This silver coin has been minted at Lakhnawatī out of the land revenue of *Bang* in the year six hundred and ninety."<sup>1</sup> This is the first mention of Bang on a Muslim inscription "as the name of the whole or part of Bengal", writes Stapleton, and it "may indicate the final incorporation under Muslim rule of the territory in Eastern Bengal held by Hindu rulers."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1922, 410

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Besides the coins at least five inscriptions of Kāikā'ūs's reign have been discovered. The earliest of these inscriptions is dated Muharram, 692/1292-93. It was found at Maheswar on the bank of the Burhi Gandak in Monghyr district of Bihar. It records the construction of a strong fort (الحصن الحصين) there by Khān-i-Khānān Fīrūz Aitigīn al-Sultānī,<sup>1</sup> who was most probably governor in that region. The fort was obviously made as a defensive measure against any hostile move by the Khaljīs. Of the other four inscriptions, two bear the same date, 1 Muharram 697/19 October 1297, and record the construction of a mosque at Deokot (Gangarampur) in Dinajpur district of Bengal,<sup>2</sup> and a *Jāmi'* mosque at Lakhisarai in Monghyr district of Bihar.<sup>3</sup> The Gangarampur mosque was erected by Zafar Khān Bahram Aitigīn, who was obviously the governor in that region. In the inscription at that place Kāikā'ūs is described as Sultān al-Salātīn Kāikā'ūs Shāh, son of Maḥmūd, son of a Sultān (i.e. Balban). The Lakhisarai *Jāmi'* mosque was erected by Diyā' al-Dīn Ulugh Khān, the deputy governor under the Khān-i-Khānān Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Fīrūz Aitigīn al-Sultānī. This inscription also describes Kāikā'ūs as Sultān-bin Sultān-bin Sultān (Sultān, son of a Sultān, son of a Sultān). This emphasis on pedigree was doubtless intended to distinguish the house of Balban that continued to rule in Bengal as against the Khaljīs of mixed breed who had captured power at Delhi. It is also noteworthy that Bihar, the frontier province, was placed under a strong governor like the Great Khān Fīrūz Aitigīn assisted by a Deputy-Governor, Diyā' al-Dīn Ulugh Khān, to keep that territory well under control and to keep a vigilant eye on the Khaljīs. The formal construction of two mosques on the same date might also suggest some important event which, unfortunately, is not on record.

The fourth inscription is dated 698/1298 and records the establishment of a *madrasa* at Tribeni, Hugli, during the governorship of Khān Muhammad Zafar Khān who is called a Turk.<sup>4</sup> The inscription itself is carved around the principal *mihrāb*

<sup>1</sup> A.B.O.R.I., XXXVI, 1955, 163-166; *E.I. Ar. & Pers. Supplement*, 1961, 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> J.A.S.B., 1872, 103-104; *E.I.M.*, 1917-18, 11-13.

<sup>3</sup> J.A.S.B., 1873, 247-248; *E.I.M.*, 1917-18, 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> J.A.S.B., 1870, 285-287; *E.I.M.*, 1917-18, 13-15.

of Zafar Khān's mosque at that place. It is written in Arabic verse and is "the oldest record of its kind" in the south Asian subcontinent; also its date is expressed in a chronogram which is the earliest example of its use in the Muslim epigraphy of this subcontinent. This inscription together with a tradition preserved in the Family Register (*Kursīnāma*)<sup>1</sup> of the *khādims* of Zafar Khān's mosque show that during Kāikā'ūs's reign the Tribeni-Hugli region developed into an important settlement and administrative headquarters for the south-western region. According to the tradition Zafar Khan Ghāzī, accompanied by Šafī, a man of illustrious descent and other men came to Hugli to punish a Hindu chief there who had been oppressing the Muslims for their practice of sacrificing cows. Zafar Khān, having defeated and converted the chief, Rājā Mān Nripati, to Islam, was afterwards killed in a battle with "Rājā Bhūdev" at Hugli. Zafar Khān's son Ughwān Khān then defeated the Rājā, married his daughter and converted the inhabitants of the region to Islam. After some time Ughwān Khān also died at Tribeni. Leaving aside the popular embellishments of the legend it may be stated that Zafar Khān Ghāzī who lies entombed at Tribeni and around whom the legend has developed, and Khān Muḥammad Zafar Khān Turk of the inscription in the nearby mosque are identical and that he was most likely one of the many Turkish nobles who were forced to take shelter in Bengal after the Khaljī revolution at Delhi. It may be noted that the reign of Kāikā'ūs synchronised with that of Jalāl al-Dīn Khaljī and the early years of that of 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī at Delhi. At any rate, the construction of the mosque at Tribeni in 698/1298 which still exists and the inscription clearly show that the Muslim authority was well consolidated there during Kāikā'ūs's reign under the governorship of Khān Muḥammad Zafar Khān. The latest inscription of Kāikā'ūs's reign, dated 700/1300, has been found at Mahāsthān in Bogra district. It records the construction of a tomb, but it does not mention the ruler's name.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The tradition was first noticed by D. Money in *J.A.S.B.*, 1847, 893. H. Blochmann personally visited Tribeni in 1870 and collected further details about the legend and also the inscription under reference. See *P.A.S.B.*, 1870, 123-125.

<sup>2</sup> *J.B.O.R.S.*, 1918, 178-179.

III. SULTĀN SHAMS AL-DĪN FIRŪZ SHĀH  
(701—702/1301—1322)

Kāikā'ūs was succeeded by Shams al-Dīn Firūz most probably in 701/1301. According to Ibn Batūta the latter was a son of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd's, i.e., a brother of Kāikā'ūs's.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the latter, however, Firūz does not describe himself in his inscriptions as *Sultān bin Sultān*. It might have been, as Thomas thinks, that Firūz "felt himself sufficiently firm in his power to discard the supererogatory adjuncts of descent or relationship."<sup>2</sup> Subsequent historians accepted Thomas's or rather Ibn Batūta's view. Recently, however, it has been pointed out that Firūz's sons call themselves *Sultān bin Sultān*; therefore if Firūz was a son of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd's they would have added a second *bin Sultān* to their names. Again Amīr Khusrau does not mention any other son of Nāṣir al-Dīn's except Kaiqobād and Kāikā'ūs. Finally, Baranī mentions that Kaiqobād was only 19 years when he ascended the Delhi throne in 687/1288. Hence if Firūz was a younger brother of Kāikā'ūs's, he would be in his mid-thirties by 710 when, on numismatic evidence, two of his grown-up sons are found contending for royal prerogatives; but at such an age it is unlikely for a person to have two grown-up sons. On these grounds it has been suggested that Firūz was not a son of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd's, but that Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Firūz Aitigīn al-Sultānī, the powerful governor of Bihar under Kāikā'ūs, captured power after the latter's death and styled himself Sultān Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shah.<sup>3</sup>

This suggestion, it may be noted, is based purely on negative evidence and on the similarity of names only. That Amīr Khusrau does not mention any other son of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd's except Kaiqobād and Kāikā'ūs does not definitely prove that there was no other son. As will be seen presently, Firūz himself had a son who was governor of Bihar but who is not mentioned by any literary source and none of whose coins have been found though a number of coins of his other brothers have come to light.

<sup>1</sup> *Rihla*, Arabic text, Beirut print, 1964, 439.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, *Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, London, 1871, 139.

<sup>3</sup> *I.H.Q.*, XVIII, No. 1, 1942, 65; *H.B.* II., 77, 93-94.

Secondly, the argument based on the calculation of age is not conclusive, especially as it is not known whether Fīrūz was really a younger brother of Kāikā'ūs's or whether they were brothers by the same mother. Even it is not quite impossible for a person of mid-thirties to have a couple of sons aged between 15 and 18 years. Lastly, as Blochmann points out, one of Fīrūz's sons, Shihāb al-Dīn, adopted the *laqab* of *Bughda* which was most probably a corruption of the word *Bughra*, and which was adopted according to the Muslim practice of occasionally assuming the name of one's grandfather (Nāsir al-Dīn Bughra Khān).

Whatever might have been Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh's ancestry, he was undoubtedly a strong and vigorous ruler. Besides three (or rather four) inscriptions, a large number of his coins have been discovered. Those minted at Lakhnawatī and discovered at Purinda in Dacca district bear the dates 701, 702, 704, 706, [70]7, [70]9, 710, 71[1], 712, 713, 714, 715 and 720. Similarly coins of the Lakhnawatī mint bearing the date 703 have been found at Enayetpur in Mymensingh. Besides these coins of the Lakhnawatī mint, coins struck at Sunārgāon (Dacca) bearing the dates 705 and 710 have also been found at Purinda; and a coin bearing the mint-name of *Banga* and dated most probably 705 has been found at Rupaibari in the Naogaon district of Assam. Thomas notices also some coins of this ruler dated 702, 715, 720 and 722. Thus on numismatic evidence Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh ruled at least for 22 years, from 701 to 722 H. (1301—1322).

The minting of coins by Fīrūz at Sunārgāon in 705 and 710 and at *Banga* in 705, coupled with the fact noticed above of Kāikā'ūs's having minted coins out of the *kharāj* of *Bang* prove conclusively that the Muslim dominion over eastern Bengal had been firmly established by that time. The same process of consolidation in the south-western region (Sātgāon-Hugli) is also visible during Fīrūz Shāh's reign. An inscription dated 713 (1313) has been discovered in Zafar Khān's tomb at Tribeni, mentioned above, which records that during Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh's reign a *madrasa* under the name of *Dār al-Khairāt* was established there by Khān Muḥammad Zafar Khān.<sup>1</sup> It would thus appear that

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1873, 287-288; E.I.M., 1917-18, 33-34.



Zafar Khān, who had extended the Muslim sway over that region during Kaikā'ūs's reign and had constructed a mosque and *madrasa* there, continued to administer the territory and consolidate it till the year 713/1313 under Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh. The building of the mosque in the previous reign and the establishment of the centre of learning (*Dār al-Khairāt*) during Firūz Shāh's time indicate a planned process of consolidation and progress. It is also noteworthy that Zafar Khān assumes the epithet of *Nāṣir al-Islām* in this inscription.<sup>1</sup>

The most important event in the reign of Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh was the further extension of the Muslim power east of Dacca upto Sylhet. The exact date of the conquest of Sylhet is in fact supplied by an inscription of the time of a later ruler 'Alā' al-Dīn Husain Shāh which, while recording the erection of a structure at Sylhet by his governor and general Rukn Khān states, by way of introduction, that "the first conquest of Islam of the town and 'arsah (district) of Sylhet was at the hand of Sikandar Khān Ghāzī in the time of Sultān Firūz Shāh Delavī in the year 703."<sup>2</sup> Though it thus records the event after about two hundred years of its occurrence, the fact that it is noted at the beginning of a commemorative document prepared by a responsible official amply vouchsafes for its correctness. At any rate its trustworthiness is far stronger than the still later popular legends. According to Stapleton, the trustworthiness of the information given by the

<sup>1</sup> D. Money who first noticed the Tribeni legend was of opinion that the two inscriptions were issued by the same Zafar Khan and that since the legend says that the latter died in a fight with "Raja Bhudev", this must have been either in or after 713 when the above mentioned inscription was issued. Both Blochmann and Stapleton follow Money in this view. Dr. Qanungo states (*H. B.* II, 77-78) however that since the legend says that Zafar Khān died at Rājā Bhudev's hand this must have occurred at the initial stage of the Muslim penetration and that therefore the Zafar Khān of 713 inscription was a different person, most probably the governor of Deokot under Kaikā'ūs (vide Gangarampur inscription). Qanungo further says that in the 713 inscription Zafar Khān describes himself "helper of kings and sovereigns" most probably because he helped Firūz Shāh to get the throne. This view is not quite convincing on the following grounds: (a) Assuming that Zafar Khān did aid Firūz Shāh to capture power, there could be no allusion to it in the earlier inscription because the alleged revolution had not then taken place. (b) Secondly, the erection of a mosque together with a *madrasa* by Zafar Khān only fifteen years ago must have been known to all. Hence if the *madrasa* of 713 was established by a different Zafar Khān he would have been distinguished by the addition of *al-Thānī* or the like at the end of his name. Most probably the new *madrasa* was only an extension of the old one. (c) Thirdly, even if the legend is accepted as true in all its details, it would indicate a prolonged conflict so that the death of Zafar Khān at a later stage in his life is not unlikely, as indeed suggested by D. Money.

<sup>2</sup> *J. A. S. B.*, 1922, 413, Pl. IX.

inscription is shown by the following facts: (a) "Sultān Fīrūz Shāh was actually on the throne of Bengal in 703"; (b) "The date is in agreement with a local tradition that when Sikandar Ghāzī at first failed to defeat Rāja Gaur Govind, Sayyid Nāsir Sipāhsalār, accompanied by Shāh Jalāl and other warrior saints [Shaikhs], came to assist him and the former was a general of Fīrūz Shāh Dehlavi"; (c) "In 703 the Sultan of Delhi was Alauddin Khilji, which agrees with another tradition mentioned in Nasiruddin Hayder's History of Sylhet (the *Suhail-i-Yamen*) that he was the Delhi emperor when Sylhet was conquered."<sup>1</sup> Stapleton further states that before conquering Sylhet Sikandar Khān Ghāzī had warred successfully against a Hindu rājā of the *Sundarbans* (south of Khulna and Barisal districts), called Mātuk, and that, interestingly enough, a coin of Sultān Fīrūz Shāh dated 710 or 720 has been discovered in a village in the extreme south of the Satkhira subdivision of the Khulna district.<sup>2</sup>

Fīrūz Shāh also held Bihar firmly as against the Khaljīs. This is proved by two inscriptions of his reign discovered in Bihar. One of them is dated 709/1309 and records the construction of "an additional building" during the governorship of the Sultān's son Hātīm Khān by his servant Muḥammad Ḥasan Bektrūrī.<sup>3</sup> The inscription was in fact found attached "to a lofty gateway which together with an arched hall, fast falling into decay, and a roofless mosque, forms", according to Blochmann, "the remains of what tradition calls Hātīm Khān's palace". The other inscription was found at Choti Dargah in Bihar. It is dated 1 Rajab 715/1 October 1315, and records the construction of a mosque by Bahrām ibn Hājī, also during the governorship of Hātīm Khān.<sup>4</sup> Thus the Bengal Sultanat during Fīrūz Shāh's rule extended from at least the rivers Son and Ghogra in Bihar in the west to Sylhet in the east, and from Dinajpur-Rangpur in the north to Hugli and the Sundarbans in the south.

One interesting feature of Fīrūz Shāh's rule is that side by side

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1922, 413-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

<sup>3</sup> J.A.S.B., 1873, 249; E.I.M., 1917-18, 22.

<sup>4</sup> J.A.S.B., 1873, 250; E.I.M., 1917-18, 34-35.

with his coins a number of coins of his sons also have been discovered. These coins are:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Mint</i>
Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd	709 or 707 (one coin)	Lakhnawatī
Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur	710, 714, 720, 721, 722, 723	Lakhnawatī
	717	Sunārgāon
	722	Ghiyāthpur
Shihāb al-Dīn Bughra (or Bughda)	717, 718	Lakhnawatī

On the basis of these coins Stapleton has propounded a theory of joint-rule by father and son and, in consequence, of fratricidal conflicts. He says that by 709 when Hātim Khan, Firūz's son, is found as governor of Bihar, "we find another son, Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd permitted by his father to strike coins at Lakhnawatī". This, however, roused "jealousy amongst Mahmud's other brothers" so that in 710 we find Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur's coinage "appearing simultaneously with that of Firuz Shah". As no other coin of Jalāl al-Dīn appears, it is further observed that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur "succeeded in arranging for the assassination of his presumptuous brother or at least of achieving his permanent exile." But then Ghiyāth al-Dīn could not enjoy the privilege undisputed and another son of Firūz Shāh, Shihāb al-Dīn Bughda, successfully obtained the right to issue coins in 717-718. As "no coins struck by Ghiyāth al-Dīn in 718 or 719 are known Shihābuddin seems to have successfully ousted his brother from his position as joint ruler with Shamsuddin during the year 717, and possibly maintained himself in power at Laknawati two years longer. In 720, however, Ghiyāth al-Dīn's coins begin again and are found in comparatively large numbers for each of the succeeding years till 723, in which year Ghiyāth al-Dīn's coinage as an independent king comes to an end."<sup>1</sup>

This theory of fratricidal conflicts, it may be noted, is based simply on gaps in dates of the coins discovered so far. Obviously

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1922, 416.

all the coins of the time have not been found. It is also noteworthy that in view of the issuance of coins simultaneously by father and son from the same mint of Lakhnawatī for some years Stapleton could not but hold that Firūz Shāh "permitted" his son to issue coins. The question that naturally poses itself is that if Firūz Shāh could without any harm to his position "permit" one of his sons initially to issue coins, there is no reason why he could not have permitted the others as well to do the same. But even accepting the theory that the sons succeeded in getting nomination, one after another, as heir-apparent and the right of issuing coins, it does not appear that Firūz Shāh was at any time ousted from power and supplanted by any one of his sons. Yet this is what Dr. Qanungo has suggested obviously on the basis of Stapleton's theory. It is stated that in 710 Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur supplanted the authority of Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd "and of his father also"; but then "Bahādur was ousted from Lakhnawati by his father in 715 A.H., because we have coins of Firuz issued in that year. But another son of Firuz Shihabuddin...declares himself independent at Lakhnawati and remains in power for two years as his coins of 717 and 718 show". Qanungo then states that in the same year, i.e., 717, Bahādur "evidently lost Lakhnawati to Shihabuddin Bughda Shah (vide Bughda's coin of 717 A.H.). As no coin of Bahadur earlier than 717 A.H. from the Sonargaon mint has come to light, whereas we have one of Firuz from this eastern mint town bearing the date 710 A.H. we may tentatively hold that Bahadur had made himself master of Sonargaon also in or about 711 A.H., and after having lost Lakhnawati retired to Sonargaon again in 717 A.H. and lived there till 720 A.H. when his coinage appears bearing the dates 720, 721, 722 and 723 A.H."<sup>1</sup>

Now, the assumption of Bahādur's having revolted against his father and of having ousted him in 710 is totally incorrect, for although Bahādur's coins of that date minted at Lakhnawatī have been discovered, Firūz's coins of the same date and minted not only at Lakhnawatī but also at Sunārgāon are extant. Obviously he was in full control of affairs at both the places and also, as the

<sup>1</sup> *H.B.* II, 80-81.

inscriptions show, in Bihar. Secondly, the theory of Shihāb al-Dīn's declaration of independence is based on the slender evidence of his coins of 717 and 718 and on the faulty assumption of Bahādur's earlier revolt. It is also somewhat self-contradictory to state that Bahādur was ousted by his father in 715 and then again to say that Bahādur "lost Lakhnawati to Shihabuddin Bughdah Shah" in 717. If Bahadur was really ousted by his father in 715, there could not be any question of his (Bahadur's) loss of Lakhnawati to Shihāb al-Dīn in 717. Thirdly, from this faulty premise it is next stated that Bahādur established himself at Sunārgāon and ousted his father's authority from there "in or about 711". If no coin of Firūz Shāh from the Sunārgāon mint except that of 710 has been found, similarly none of Bahādur's except that of 717 has been found. How could then it be logically suggested that Bahādur established himself at Sunārgāon in 711, i.e. six years earlier than the date of his coin? Obviously, the assumption is based on the theory of Bahādur's having supplanted his father's authority at Lakhnawati in 710, which, as already pointed out above, is totally incorrect. Lastly, Bahādur's coins of 720, 721, 722 and 723 were in fact issued from Lakhnawati along with the coins of Firūz Shah for the same period terminating in 722. If Bahādur had kept his father out of power from Lakhnawati for some time and from Sunārgāon from 711 to 720, he would not have been allowed to issue coins from Lakhnawati after having, presumably, lost control of Sunārgāon. Thus the theory of revolt by Firūz's sons and his being ousted from power at intervals raises more questions than it solves. The greatest objection to it is that had there been such internecine conflicts and struggles these would surely have drawn the hostile Khaljis into the Bengal scene as, after Firūz's death, the rivalry among his sons led to the Tughlaq intervention in Lakhnawati affairs. Till the discovery of further facts, therefore, the question why Firūz Shāh allowed his sons to issue coins along with his own cannot be answered satisfactorily.

Towards the close of Firūz Shāh's reign the Khaljis at Delhi were supplanted by the Tughlaqs in 720/1320. There was now another exodus of nobles from Delhi to Bengal. It is stated by Ibn

Batūta that after the attempted rebellion of Juna Khān against his father Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq, the latter meted out severe punishment upon some of the former's partisans and the "other amirs fled to Sultān Shams al-Dīn, son of Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn, son of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban, and established themselves at his court."<sup>1</sup> Shortly afterwards, in 722/1322 Firūz Shāh died.

IV: STRUGGLE FOR SUCCESSION AMONG FIRŪZ SHĀH'S SONS  
AND THE TUGHLAQ INTERVENTION

After Firūz Shāh's death there followed a struggle for succession among his sons. According to Ibn Batūta, Firūz Shāh had left the throne to his son Shihāb al-Dīn, but this was disputed by his younger brother Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur Burah who "overpowered him, seized upon the kingdom and killed his brother Qatlu Khān and most of his other brothers. Two of them, Sultan Shihāb al-Dīn and Nāṣir al-Dīn fled to Tughlaq, who marched forth with them to fight the fratricide."<sup>2</sup> Baranī's account of the same incident agrees substantially with that of Ibn Batūta except that it was not Shihāb al-Dīn and Nāṣir al-Dīn but "certain of the chief men of Lakhnawati" who went to Delhi and complained to the Tughlaq Sultān about the state of affairs in Bengal. It also appears from Baranī's account that Nāṣir al-Dīn had succeeded in establishing himself at least at Lakhnawati when the Tughlaq Sultān arrived at the frontiers of Bengal. The dispute among Firūz's sons naturally offered the much desired opportunity to the Tughlaqs for intervention in Bengal. Accordingly Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq, having appointed his son Muḥammad "Regent" in his absence, marched towards Bengal with a large army early in 724/1324. On his way he conquered Tirhut and annexed it to the Delhi Sultānat. When the Tughlaq Sultān reached Tirhut, writes Baranī, Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn "came with submission and obedience to the court and humbly offered allegiance so that before the sword of Tughlaq Shāh was drawn, all the chiefs and nobles of that country hastened to do him service, and to offer him their obedience."<sup>3</sup> From Tirhut Ghiyāth

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Batūta, *Rihla*, (Arabic text) Beirut print, 1964, 439.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Baranī, 450.

al-Dīn Tughlaq sent his adopted son Bahram alias Tātār Khān with a strong army against Bahādur Shāh, who is called "the rebellious governor of Sunārgāon". Tātār Khān, most probably supported by Nāsir al-Dīn, proceeded against Bahādur. It appears that the encounter took place not very far from Lakhnawātī and that Bahādur, being defeated, attempted to escape towards the east, most probably to Ghiyāthpur in eastern Bengal, about 15 miles south-west of the present Mymensingh town, wherefrom he had previously issued coins. He was chased, captured and, in the words of Baranī, "brought with a halter round his neck into the presence of the king." Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq then confirmed Sultān Nāsir al-Dīn in the government of Lakhnawātī because he was the "first in rendering loyalty and submission"; but Sunārgāon and Sāt-gāon were annexed and, as subsequent events show, placed under the charge of Tātār Khān.<sup>1</sup> The claims of Shihāb al-Dīn, if he was still alive, were obviously passed over. After making this arrangement Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq left for Delhi taking Bahādur as captive with him.

Two main aspects of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's administrative arrangements in Bengal may be noted. He took into account the three distinct physical zones over which the Muslim sway had been extended. These were north Bengal (Lakhnawātī) covering the tract fenced off by the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, south-south-western Bengal (Sāt-gāon-Lakhnor region) and eastern Bengal (Sunārgāon region). Secondly, Sultān Nāsir al-Dīn was in effect reduced to the position of one of the Tughlaq governors in Bengal. That he recognized the suzerainty of Delhi is clearly proved by the coins which he issued in the joint-names of himself and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq. On these coins, however, Nāsir al-Dīn describes himself as Sultān bin Sultān while Ghiyāth al-Dīn is merely called Sultān. No date is discernible from the coins, but as Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq died in 725/1325, it has been held that the "coin must have been struck either in this or the previous year."

On the very day of his return to Delhi, however, Ghiyāth

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

al-Dīn Tughlaq died by the fall of a pavillion which had been erected for his reception, and his son Muhammad Tughlaq succeeded to the Delhi throne (Rabī'ī 725/Feb.-March 1325). Almost immediately after his accession he pardoned Bahādur Shāh, "removed his fetters, gave him an abundance of gifts in money, horses and elephants and sent him back to Lakhnawati" to rule the territory along with Bahrām Khān on condition that he, Bahādur, should send his son Muhammad known as Barbāt as hostage to Delhi, should strike coins in the joint-names of himself and Sultān Muhammad Tughlaq and should also read the *khutba* in their joint-names.<sup>1</sup> Bahādur's reinstatement on these conditions by Muhammad Tughlaq was probably intended to keep a check on Bahrām alias Tātar Khān, a loyal servant of the deceased Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughlaq, and in pursuance of a new policy of rearranging the administrative units. Accordingly Malīk Pindar or Bedār Khaljī with the title of Qadr Khān was also appointed at Lakhnawati nominally to administer it under Nāsir al-Dīn but really under the direction of Muhammad Tughlaq himself. Moreover, Sātgaon was constituted into a separate governorship and 'A'zam al-Mulk 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā was appointed governor over it.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur carried out all the terms of the agreement except sending his son to the Delhi court. He continued to issue coins from the Sunārgaon mint in the joint names of himself and the Tughlaq Sultān till 728/1328. Similarly Nāsir al-Dīn at Lakhnawati also issued coins in joint-names till 727 when he either died or was summoned to Delhi to join a campaign against the rebellious Kishlu Khān of Multan. During the early years of Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, however, the Muslim dominion was further extended to the east-south-east upto Chittagong. According to a popular tradition Fakhr al-Dīn,

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Batūta, *Rihla*, 480. Ibn Batūta is obviously mistaken in calling Bahrām Khān (or Ibrāhīm Khān) as the "son of his brother". Most probably the expression *ابن أخيه* has been misprinted as *ابن أخيه* due to clerical error or illegibility in the manuscript. Ibn Batūta's text runs as follows:

ولما ولي السلطان الملك بعد أبيه وبايعه الناس احضر السلطان غياث بهادر بوره الذي كان أسره السلطان تغلق فمن عليه وفك قيوده وأجزل له العطاء من الأموال والخيل والعيقة وصرفه الى مملكته وبعث معه ابن اخيه ابراهيم خان، وعاهده ان تكون المملكة مشاطرة بينهما، وتكتب أسماؤهما معا في السكة، ويخطف لها، وعمل أن يصرف غياث الدين ابنه محمد المعروف ببرباط، ويكون رهينة عند السلطان.



the *silāhdār* (armour-bearer) of Bahram Khān (Tātār Khān) brought this region under control and established his headquarters at Bhulua or Noakhali.<sup>1</sup> In 728/1328, however, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādūr, taking advantage of Muḥammad Tughlaq's preoccupation with Kishlū Khān's rebellion, attempted to shake off his allegiance to the Tughlaq Sultān. Tātār Khān, assisted by other *amīrs*, defeated and killed him, flayed his skin and sent it to Delhi where it was exhibited as an warning to future rebels.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter the three regions of Lakhnawatī, Sātgaon and Sunārgaon were governed for the following ten years respectively by Qadr Khān, 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā and Bahrām Khān. In 738 Bihar was separated from the Lakhnawatī dominion and was made a distinct administrative zone; and in the following year Muḥammad Tughlaq issued his own coins in Bengal. In 739 Bahrām alias Tātār Khān died. This acted as a signal for a new series of struggles for power which ultimately led to the establishment of Ilyās Shāhī rule in Bengal.

It would be clear from the foregoing survey that within the first century and a quarter of the conquest of Nadia by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī the Muslim sway extended all over Bengal and the Sylhet district of Assam, besides the adjoining region of Bihar. The progress of conquest, compared with the rapidity with which Muḥammad Ghorī and his lieutenants had swept over northern India, was rather slow. This was due to a number of factors of which divisions within the ranks of the Muslims themselves, particularly conflicts between the Lakhnawatī and the Delhi rulers, were the main. With the exception of Yūzbak's Assam campaign and the sporadic attempts at resistance by the Orissa rulers or their proteges in the south-west, neither Hindu nor Muslim sources refer to any attempt by Lakshman Sena or his successors, or for that matter by any other Hindu chief of Bengal, to regain the lost ground. On the other hand the few brief references to some of the Lakhnawatī

<sup>1</sup> When Ibn Batuta visited eastern Bengal about 740/1340 he found Chittagong under the jurisdiction of Fakhr al-Dīn. This confirms the truth of the popular tradition. See *infra*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Qanungo is not quite correct in saying (*H.B.* II, 89) that Bahādūr's rebellion is not noted by any contemporary historian except 'Iṣāmī. It is in fact noticed also by Ibn Baṭūṭa. *op. cit.*, 480.

rulers' expeditions to eastern Bengal (Bang) appear to be rather leisurely excursions undertaken at intervals between mutual struggles for power and conflicts with Delhi. These too were abandoned as quickly as they were undertaken to meet new developments at or near the capital. The general view that emerges is that the Muslim leaders after Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Khaljī were too busy with mutual rivalry and struggles for power to pay any serious attention to the question of extending their dominion towards the river-intersected eastern Bengal; and when some of them did really undertake the task with any earnestness, as was the case with Muḡhīth al-Dīn Ṭuḡhrāl and Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh, the success of the Muslim arms was quick and steady. So far as the people in general were concerned we do not hear of any opposition on their part to the establishment of Muslim rule. On the contrary there are unmistakable indications that many of them heartily welcomed it as a relief from the system of inequality and oppression which the Sena rule had imposed on them. It was this tacit popular support and cooperation which explains the rather paradoxical phenomenon that despite the suicidal internal quarrels and divisions the newly established Muslim rule was not only not overthrown but that it continued to gain in extent and stability as time went on.

## CHAPTER VII THE ILYĀS SHĀHĪ SULTĀNAT

I. FAKHR AL-DĪN MUBĀRAK SHĀH'S RULE IN EASTERN BENGAL

On Bahrām Khān alias Tātār Khān's death at Sunārgāon his armour-bearer (*silāḥdār*) and right-hand man Fakhr al-Dīn captured power there, proclaimed independence and assumed the title of Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Mubārak Shāh.<sup>1</sup> The contemporary histories call him Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn, or more commonly, Fakhra;<sup>2</sup> but on his coins his full name appears as indicated above. The histories also assign him a reign of only two years and some months; but his coins so far discovered extend over a period of more than ten years, from 739 to 750 H. (1338—1349) covering each of the intervening years.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the "date given in the histories should be corrected", as Blochmann points out, to "ten years and some months."<sup>4</sup> All the coins of Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak were issued from Sunārgāon and on them he also describes himself as the "Right hand of the Khalīfa" and "Helper of the Commander of the Faithful" (مُحِيزُ الْخَلِيفَةِ نَاصِرُ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ).

Fakhr al-Dīn's assumption of independence did not go unopposed. On Muḥammad Tughlaq's instructions his other governors in Bengal, Qadr Khān at Lakhnawātī and 'Izz al-Dīn Yahyā at Sāt-gāon, joined by Firūz Khān, governor of Kara (Allahabad), marched against him. Being defeated by the combined forces Fakhr al-Dīn vacated Sunārgāon and withdrew with his troops towards the east. Qadr Khān occupied Sunārgāon where he stayed on for sometime while the other governors returned to their respective provinces. Soon, however, differences arose in the ranks of Qadr Khān's men because, we are told, he

<sup>1</sup> Edward Thomas, on the basis of a coin-date which he reads "seven" ( سبعة ) is of opinion that Fakhr al-Dīn's accession took place in 737/1336 (*Chronicles*, 263, pl. VI, fig. 7); but Blochmann points out that in the absence of diacritical marks the reading سبعة is more "likely", which the histories give, especially because the numerous coins hitherto found do not give the intervening year (740)". *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 252.

<sup>2</sup> *Elliott & Dowson*, III, 304, Ibn Batuta, *op. cit.*, 611.

<sup>3</sup> *Cat. II*, 149, Nos. 17-20; *Cat. II, Suppl.*, 42, Nos. 8-20. The full title runs thus:

السُّلْطَانُ الْأَعْظَمُ مُحَمَّدُ الدِّينِ أَبُو الْمُظْفَرِ مُبَارَكُ شَاهِ السُّلْطَانِ

<sup>4</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 252.

had arrogated to himself the "booty" depriving the soldiery of their canonical share of it. In the meantime the rainy season set in and a large number of Qadr Khān's men and horses fell victims to the wet and vapoury weather. Taking advantage of this situation Fakhr al-Dīn reappeared from his retreat and besieged Qadr Khān by water. The latter was now deserted by his own men who, facing the danger of extinction at the hands of their enemies, rose against him and killed him. Fakhr al-Dīn regained control of Sunārgāon.

Qadr Khān's death at Sunārgāon threw the affairs at Lakhnawātī in a melting pot. At that place his general 'Alī Mubārak killed the deputy governor and captured power. He hastened to acknowledge his allegiance to the Delhi Sultān Muḥammad Tughlaq and urged him to appoint a governor for Lakhnawātī. A nomination was then actually made by the Tughlaq Sultān, but the premature death at Delhi of the governor-designate and the outbreak of a series of rebellions in other parts of the Sultanat prevented Muḥammad Tughlaq from paying any more attention to the affairs at Lakhnawātī and Sunārgāon. Under the circumstances 'Alī Mubārak also assumed independence and issued coins under the title of 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī Shāh and also described himself as "helper of the Commander of the Faithful".<sup>1</sup> Thus Fakhr al-Dīn at Sunārgāon and 'Alī Shāh at Firūzabād (Pandua) continued to rule independently. At Sātgaon 'Izz al-Dīn Yaḥyā died soon afterwards and the territory passed, as it appears, under the control of Ḥājī Ilyās who ultimately succeeded in establishing his dynasty in Bengal.

The relationship between Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak and 'Alī Shāh was not at all friendly and there were constant conflicts between the two. Ibn Baṭūṭa, who visited eastern Bengal during Fakhr al-Dīn's time, notes that during the rainy season the latter used to attack Lakhnawātī by water, because of his strength in the river flotilla; whereas during the dry season 'Alī Shāh used to retaliate by land, because of his superiority in land forces.<sup>2</sup> None could dislodge the other, however.

<sup>1</sup> *Cat.* II, 150, No. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa, *Rihla*, 611.

'Alī Shāh was however soon challenged in his position by his foster-brother Ḥājī Ilyās who had arrived from Delhi about that time. It is stated that on his arrival he was put into prison by 'Alī Shāh but was shortly afterwards released because of the intercession of his (Ilyās's) mother who had been 'Alī Shāh's nurse. In fact Ḥājī Ilyās was the leader of a new group of men who had lately betaken themselves to Bengal. In a short time Ḥājī Ilyās gained considerable strength and entered into a struggle with 'Alī Shāh for power. Coins issued by 'Alī Shāh from the Firūzabād mint in 742, 744, 745 and 746 and those issued by Ilyās from the same mint in 740 and 744 clearly suggest that the struggle continued for some years<sup>1</sup> and that probably the two "brothers" alternately gained control of the capital city. It also appears that being at first unable to dislodge 'Alī Shāh, Ḥājī Ilyās gained control of the south-western region of Sātgaon wherefrom he issued coins in 743 onwards. Interestingly enough his only inscription hitherto discovered has been found at Baniapukur (Calcutta). It is dated 2 Sha'bān, 743/31 December, 1342 and it records the construction of a mosque for Shaikh 'Alā' al-Ḥaq (most probably for his use as an institution of learning).<sup>2</sup> The mosque is not in existence, but the inscription could not have been removed far away from the site. From 746/1345, however, we have coins of Ilyās issued in uninterrupted succession from Firūzabād till 758. It is clear, therefore, that he succeeded in completely ousting 'Alā'al-Dīn 'Alī Shāh by 746 at the latest.

The relationship of Ilyās with Fakhr al-Dīn, who continued to rule at Sunārgaon is not known. As indicated above, the latter ruled there till 750/1349 during which period he consolidated his hold over entire eastern Bengal upto Chittagong which was well under his control. He constructed a road from Chandpur (in modern Comila district) to Chittagong, and adorned the latter place with mosques and other buildings.<sup>3</sup> He was succeeded by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh who issued coins from the Sunārgaon mint, in 750 and 753. On his coins he styles himself as "son of the

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, *Chronicles*, 267; *Cat. II, Suppl.* 43, No. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *E.I.M.*, 1939-40, 7-9, Pl. IV.

<sup>3</sup> J.N. Sarkar, *Studies in Mughal India*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 122.

Sultān". He was therefore most probably a son of Fakhr al-Dīn.<sup>1</sup> However, in the latter year (753) Ilyās gained control of Sunārgāon, most probably by ousting Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh, and then united all the three provinces of Bangālah, Sāt-gāon and Lakhnawatī under him and thus founded the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty which, with an interruption of about forty years, continued to rule over Bengal till 896 H.



Coins of Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Ghāzī Shāh  
(Left 753 H.: Right 750 H.: both of Sunārgāon)



Coins of Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh  
(Right 753 H.39: Sunārgāon)  
(Reproduced from *Memoirs*, Figs. 1 and 12).

<sup>1</sup> According to Ibn Baṭūṭa (See *infra*), however, Fakhr al-Dīn's only son was killed by a Faqīr during the former's lifetime.

## II. IBN BATUTA IN BENGAL

During Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak's rule in eastern Bengal Ibn Batuta visited that country. After having travelled extensively through north Africa, Arabia and the Islamic world, and after having served as Qādī at Delhi, the Moroccan traveller started again on a tour of the far eastern lands, particularly China. He boarded a ship from a port called "Fattān",<sup>1</sup> but before he could proceed long the ship was attacked and robbed by pirates who left him along with the others on the shore. He then reached Calicut in south-western India and after some days' stay there took another ship which sailed via a group of islands which he calls "Dhaibat al-Mahal".<sup>2</sup> However, after forty nights on the seas he reached the "country of Bangālah". "The first city we entered in the country of Bangālah", he writes, "was Sadkāwān. It is a big city, on the shore of the great sea. With it meets the river Ganges, to which the Hindus make pilgrimage, and the river Jun (Jumna), and they both fall into the sea. They have many ships in the river with which they fight with the country of Lakhnawatī."<sup>3</sup> Now, the identification of this *Sadkawan* has been a matter of some controversy. Most of the scholars have hitherto held that this was Sātgaon, near Hugli which, they say, was an important port in those days. A close analysis of Ibn Batuta's text, however, suggests that it was Chittagong which, even now-a-days is commonly known as "Chātgaon". The most important point to note in this connection is that Sadkawan was a big city on the very shore of "the great sea", that is the Indian Ocean or the Bay of Bengal. It cannot therefore be any place near Hugli which lies some one hundred miles upstream of the river Hugli. The modern city of Chittagong is of course about eight miles up the river Karnafuli, but the port, now-a-days, as it must have in the past, is just on the coast of the sea. Secondly, Chittagong is situated at the

<sup>1</sup> Most probably Vizagapatam which is a corruption of its original name of "Isahq Fattan."

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Batuta, *op. cit.*, pp. 609-610. Yāqūt, in his famous "Dictionary of Place-names" (*Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 6 Vols.) does not deal with Dhaibat al-Mahal, nor with such other places as Sadkāwān, Barahnakar, etc., mentioned by Ibn Batuta. It is Maldives.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Batuta, *op. cit.*, p. 611. The Arabic text runs as follows:

وأول مدينة دخلتها من بلاد بنجالة مدينة سدكاوان، وهي مدينة عظيمة على ساحل البحر الأعظم ويجتمع بها نهر الكلك الذي يصب إلى الهند ونهر الجون، ويصبان في البحر ولهم في النهر مراكب كثيرة يقاتلون بها أهل بلاد لكهنري.

eastern extremity of the mouth of the Ganges which meets the sea here. Ibn Baṭūṭa speaks clearly about the joining of the Ganges with the sea here, and although he mentions the river Jumna, he obviously means the mouth of the joint-stream, and not the confluence of the two rivers, by mentioning that they both fall into the sea here.<sup>1</sup> It may be mentioned here that the river Jumna is in northern India and it meets the river Ganges near Allahabad and the joint-stream then flows into Bengal where, near the northern limits of the Dacca district, it is further joined by the river Brahmaputra, also locally known as Jumna,<sup>2</sup> and the combined stream is further met by the river Meghna near the southern end of the same Dacca district, forming a wide torrent whose mouth, when it meets the sea, stretches from the south-eastern limits of Barisal district upto Chittagong. Those who are inclined to identify Sadkāwān with Sātḡāon near Hugli emphasize the point of the Hindus' making pilgrimage at Tribeni near Hugli; but carefully read, Ibn Baṭūṭa's text does not really say that the Hindus used to make pilgrimage at the site of Sadkāwān: he mentions this fact by way of identifying to his Arab readers the river Ganges, "to which Hindus make pilgrimage". In any case, although the river by the ancient site of Sātḡāon (Hugli) was wider and that Tribeni is the meeting-place of two other smaller off-shoots of the Ganges, the spot can by no stretch of imagination be described as the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna, nor, as already pointed out, did Ibn Baṭūṭa mean to say that Sadkāwān was situated at the confluence of these two rivers. His main emphasis is the "shore of the great sea" where the Ganges meets it. Thirdly, a more important point is that Ibn Baṭūṭa distinguishes the two "countries" of Bangālah and Lakhnawātī and states unequivocally that Sadkāwān is a city in the country of Bangālah. The Sātḡāon (Hugli) region had been brought under Muslim sway a little over a quarter of a century before Ibn Baṭūṭa's visit (the latest of Zafar Khān's inscription at that place being dated 710/1310). The history of Muslim expansion in that region as gleaned from inscriptions and

<sup>1</sup> See carefully the Arabic text given in the previous note.

<sup>2</sup> See *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XXVI (Atlas), plate 30.



traditions does not in any way indicate it to be a riparian or coastal region with any naval tradition. At any rate the area was not definitely known as part of Bangālah at that time. Moreover, at the time of Ibn Baṭūṭa's visit this area was most probably held by Ilyās Shāh, the foster-brother and adversary of 'Alī Shāh of Lakhnawatī. Had Ibn Baṭūṭa passed through that region, he would have made at least some indirect reference to this fact. Fourthly, that Ibn Baṭūṭa was well aware of the distinction between Bangālah and Lakhnawatī and meant Chittagong by the term Sadkāwān is all the more clear from his mention of its ruler being Fakhr al-Dīn, the circumstances through which he became independent and his relation with the ruler of Lakhnawatī. It is a known fact that Fakhr al-Dīn had brought the Chittagong region under Muslim sway. Ibn Baṭūṭa's statement that he saw many ships inside the river near Sadkāwān with which wars were fought with Lakhnawatī suggests that in course of his eastward expansion Fakhr al-Dīn had built up a sizeable naval force which came to be his chief source of strength in subsequent times. It may be recalled that when attacked by Qadr Khān, the governor of Lakhnawatī, Fakhr al-Dīn at first withdrew towards the east and then, in the rainy season, besieged Qadr Khān by water and recaptured Sunārgāon. Ibn Baṭūṭa adds: "When Fakhr al-Dīn saw that the kingdom had gone out of the hands of the descendants of Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn he (Fakhr al-Dīn) revolted from Sadkāwān and Bangālah and became independent."<sup>1</sup> This confirms the information obtained from other sources that Fakhr al-Dīn, after the death of Bahrām alias Tātār Khān, revolted in east Bengal (Sunārgāon) and declared independence. It is clear from Ibn Baṭūṭa's account that Fakhr al-Dīn had his strength in naval force and in the eastern region of Chittagong. The sources at our disposal do not in any way suggest that he revolted from south-western Bengal or Hugli region. Thus Sadkāwān, from where Fakhr al-Dīn revolted and declared independence must be Chittagong. Reference has already

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa, p. 611. The text is as follows: فلما رأى فخر الدين أن الملك قد خرج عن أولاد

السلطان ناصر الدين وهو مولى لهم تخالف بسد كاوان وبلاد بنجاله واستقل بالملك.

The statement "Sadrkāwān and Banglah" is here a conjoint expression meaning the same country, as earlier Ibn Baṭūṭa states that Sadkāwān was a city in Bangālah.

been made to Fakhr al-Dīn's use of the ships during the rainy season for attack on Lakhnawatī. These ships were seen by Ibn Batuta in the river near Sadkāwān. Obviously Fakhr al-Dīn could not have kept his ships in the far-off place of Hugli, apparently leaving his capital Sunārgāon unprotected. On the contrary, it was just reasonable on his part to keep the ship in readiness not far from the capital, a few miles to the south of Sunārgāon, that is at the mouth of the river Ganges. Thus a little careful study of the facts mentioned by Ibn Batuta makes it clear that he landed at Chittagong which has from time immemorial been an important port on the international shipping highways. There is thus no need to divert history and Ibn Batuta from Chittagong to Hugli.

Ibn Batuta states that on entering Sadkāwān he did not purposely intend to see the ruler of the land, Fakhr al-Dīn, because he was a rebel against the Delhi Sultān and as such a meeting with him might create misgivings in the mind of the latter.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the traveller noted that Fakhr al-Dīn was a benevolent Sultān, kind towards strangers and guests. Ibn Batuta further noticed that there were a large number of *faqīrs* or religious mendicants in Bangālāh at that time and that the Sultān was particularly favourably disposed towards them. They were given the privilege of free travel through the land, and no tolls were to be collected from them while journeying on the river. On the other hand they were to be given provision if they had none. When a *faqīr* arrived at a new city he was to be given a half-dinār.<sup>2</sup> Sultan Fakhr al-Dīn even appointed one such *faqīr* named Shaidā as his deputy at Sadkāwān and then went out to fight one of his enemies. Shaidā, however, revolted, killed the Sultān's only son, and attempted to be the absolute ruler of the kingdom. On coming to know this the Sultān hurried back from the campaign in order to chastise Shaidā. The latter fled to Sunārgāon where he was captured by the people and beheaded at the Sultān's orders. A large number of other *faqīrs* who were followers of Shaidā also lost their lives on account of his rebellion.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 612.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 615.

Thereafter the Sultān's love for them abated.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Baṭūṭa travelled direct from Sadkāwān to Assam, or the "Hills of Kāmṛū", as he calls it, because his chief aim in breaking his journey to the Far East was to see the famous religious personage, "Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī"<sup>2</sup> who had his abode in Assām (Sylhet). What route Ibn Baṭūṭa followed in travelling to Sylhet is not clearly stated. He merely says that from Sadkāwān to the hills of Kāmṛū, which "are extensive, spreading upto Tibet and China", is one month's journey. Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn was a person of uncommon spiritual qualities, says Ibn Baṭūṭa, "who had performed splendid deeds and had been one of the Muslim colonists". The Shaikh "had been present at Baghdad at the time of the assassination of Khalīfa Al-Musta'ṣim Billah, and afterwards betook himself to Assam where the people accepted Islam at his hands. For this reason he settled amongst them."<sup>3</sup> He was tall and slim, with lean cheeks. He kept fast consecutively for forty years, taking food at ten days' intervals only, and that also only the milk of a cow which was his sole possession. A cave of a low hill was his abode near which was a hospice and a mosque.<sup>4</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa narrates a number of miraculous deeds of the Shaikh. One of which was that when Ibn Baṭūṭa approached the territory of Assam the Shaikh could intuitively know of his presence and sent four men to welcome him. These men met him at a distance of four days' journey from the Shaikh's abode and told him that they had come there at the latter's order to receive him.<sup>5</sup> When Ibn Baṭūṭa arrived with them in the presence of the Shaikh, the latter stood up and embraced him, and asked about his country and travels and then bade the men to honour and entertain him. Accordingly they took him to the hospice and entertained him there for three days,<sup>6</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa further notes that both Muslims

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 611-612.

<sup>2</sup> As Shaikh Shāh Jalāl's tomb exists in Sylhet, Ibn Baṭūṭa had in fact travelled upto the district of Sylhet. There is, however, a confusion on his part about the name of the Shaikh. The Sylhet Shikh was Shāh Jalāl Mujarrad Yamani. Shaikh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī is a different person. The latter's field of activity was in north Bengal (Gaud) and he died most probably in 642 H./1244 A.C.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 612.

<sup>4</sup> The expression used is زارية (p. 613), which in north Africa means a mosque erected by the resting place of a religious personage with teaching facilities and a hospice attached to it.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 613.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* The Arabic text runs as follows: ولما دخلت عليه قام إلي وعانقني وسألني عن بلادي وأسفاري =

and non-Muslims used to visit the Shaikh and bring gifts and presents which were, however, used for the food of the *faqīrs* and the visitors to the place. The Moroccan traveller was impressed by the people of Sylhet who, he says, look "like the Turks possessing strength for service. A young man of them was equal to a number of young men from others. They were also noted for sorcery and magic which they practised."<sup>1</sup>

After taking leave of the Shaikh Ibn Baṭūṭa started on his return journey in the course of which he first visited the city of "Habang" which he describes as one of the biggest and nicest cities in the region. The river "Azraq" (The Blue River) originating in the "hills of Kāmṛū" passed through that city and it was by that river that people travelled to "Bangālāh" and the "country of Laknawātī".<sup>2</sup> The city of "Habang" is not now-a-days identifiable but the name is clearly Assamese and it was not far from the abode of Shāh Jalāl. The river spoken of is obviously the Meghna. Past that city Ibn Baṭūṭa saw on the right and the left of the river orchards and water-wheels and villages. The inhabitants of that part of the country were non-Muslims (*Kuffār*) under the protection of the Muslims who used to pay "half their crops and other taxes" to the government.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa travelled down that river for fifteen days, through prosperous villages and gardens, "as if we were passing through a market". He also saw innumerable boats plying on the river each of them carrying a

فأخبرني فقال لي: أنت مسافر العرب، فقال له من حضر من أصحابي: والمعجم يأميدنا، فقال: والعجم، فأكرمه  
فاحتملوني إلى الزاوية وأضافوني.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 612. The text is as follows:

وأهل هذا الجبل يشبهون الترك ولهم قوة على الخدمة، والقلام منهم يساوي أضعاف ما يساويه الغلام من غيرهم  
وهم مشهورون بمعانة البحر والاشتغال به.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 614-615. The text runs as follows:

ولما وادعت الشيخ جلال الدين سافرت إلى مدينة حقيق، وهي من أكبر المدن وأحسنها، يشقها النهر الذي  
ينزل من جبال كامرو، ويسمى النهر الأزرق، ويسافر فيه إلى بنجالة وبلاد اللكهونز، وعليه النواعير والبساتين  
والقري بجنة ويسر كما هي على نيل مصر وأهلها كفار تحت الذمة يؤخذ منهم نصف ما يزدعون ووظائف سوى  
ذلك.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 615. This expression of Ibn Baṭūṭa's has been taken by some writers to observe that the lot of the Hindu population under Fakhr al-Dīn "was not very enviable" (*H.B.* II., 102); but it should be noted that Ibn Baṭūṭa here speaks only about a particular area near Sylhet, a region which was recently conquered by the Muslims. There is no evidence to show that the Hindus throughout Bangālāh had a similar lot under Fakhr al-Dīn.

drum; when two boats met, each of them beat the drum and saluted the other. Thus journeying for fifteen days on the river Ibn Baṭūṭa arrived at Sunārgāon where he found a ship bound for Java which he boarded and left Bangālāh. The distance between Sunārgāon and Java, he noted, was forty days' sail.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Baṭūṭa makes specific reference to the economic prosperity of the land. The "country of Bangālāh" is extensive with an abundance of rice, he says. "Nowhere in the world have I seen things cheaper than here, but it is unenlightened. People of Khorasan call it *Dozakh-pur-Ni'mat*, meaning that it is a hell full of bounties. I have seen rice sold in its markets at 25 Delhi *ratls* for a silver *dinār*, eight *dirhams* making a silver *dinār*; their *dirhams* are like *naqra dirhams*, while a Delhi *ratl* is equivalent to twenty Moroccan *ratls*. I have heard them say that even this is high price for them!"<sup>2</sup> The traveller further states that a Moroccan named Maṣmūdi who lived with his wife and servant in Bangālāh for a long time related to him that they purchased a whole year's provision for the three at eight *dirhams* only, that he (Maṣmūdi) "used to buy eighty Delhi *ratls* of paddy at eight *dirhams*, and when these were husked he got net 50 *ratls* rice, that is ten *qintārs*."<sup>3</sup> "I have seen a good milch cow sold at three silver *dinārs*", continues the traveller, "and fat chickens sold at the rate of eight for a *dirham*, and 15 pigeons sold at a *dirham*. I have seen a fat sheep being sold at two *dirhams*, a *ratl* of sugar at four *dirhams*,

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Baṭūṭa, *op. cit.*, p. 615. Incidentally it may be noted that Al-Idrīsī, the famous Arab geographer, while speaking about the port of Samandar states that it lies at a distance of 15 days' journey from Kāmru. This, taken with Ibn Baṭūṭa's information would indicate that the port of "Samandar" was not very far from Sunārgāon. The text runs as follows:

وسافرنا في هذا النهر خمسة عشر يوماً بين القرى والبساتين فكانما في سوق من الأسواق وفيه من المراكب ما لا يحصى كثرة وفي كل مركب منها طبل - فإذا التقى المركبان ضرب كل واحد طبله وسلم بعضه على بعض -

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 610. The text is as follows:

وهي بلاد متسعة كثيرة الأرز، ولم أر في الدنيا أرخص اسعاراً منها لكنها مظلمة وأهل خراسان يسمونها دوزخست (دوزخ) بور (بر) معناه: جهنم ملأى بالنعم - رأيت الأرز يباع في أسواقها خمسة وعشرين رطلاً ذهلياً بدینار فضي، والدينار الفضي هو ثمانية دراهم ودرهمهم كالدرهم النقرة سواء والبرطل الذهلي عشرون رطلاً مغربياً - سمعتهم يقولون إن ذلك غلاء عندهم

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* The text is as follows:

حدثني محمد المصمودي المغربي وكان من الصالحين سكن هذا البلد قديماً ومات عندي بدهلي، إنه كانت له زوجة وخادم فكان يشتري قوت ثلاثتهم في السنة بثمانية دراهم وإنه كان يشتري الأرز في قشره بحساب ثمانين رطلاً ذهلياً بثمانية دراهم فإذا دفعه خرج منه خمسون رطلاً صافية، وهي عشرة قناطير.

that is a Delhi *ratl* a *ratl* of rose-water at eight *dirhams*; a *ratl* of ghee at four *dirhams*; and a *ratl* of *Sairaj* [ ? ] at two *dirhams*. I have seen fine and delicate cotton cloth sold at two *dinārs* per measure of thirty cubits; and have seen bed-adorning slave girls sold at a gold *dinār* each, that is two and a half *dinārs* of Morocco. I myself purchased at about that price a slave girl named 'Āshūra. She had exquisite beauty. One of my companions purchased a tender-aged slave named Lu'-Lu' at two gold *dinārs*."<sup>1</sup>

Any attempt at computing the quantities and prices of the various commodities mentioned by Ibn Baṭūṭa in terms of the present-day standards of measures and currencies is almost impossible, for not only the standards of measures but also the relative values of gold and silver have undergone tremendous changes through the ages. Yet, taking the Delhi *ratl* to be approximately 14 *seers* (about 29 lbs.)<sup>2</sup> and the value of a silver *dinār* to be approximately seven rupees,<sup>3</sup> we may state the prices of some of the commodities as follows:

Rice approx. 8½ mds. (25 Delhi *ratls*) at Rs. 7 (1 silver *dinār*)

Paddy approx. 25 mds. (80 Delhi *ratls*) at Rs. 7 (8 *dirhams*)  
= 1 silv. *dinar*)

Sugar approx. 14 *seers* (1 Delhi *ratl*) at Rs. 3½ (4 *dirhams*)

Ghee approx. 14 *seers* (1 Delhi *ratl*) at Rs. 3½ (4 *dirhams*)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 610. These are Ibn Baṭūṭa's own words:

ورأيت البقرة تباع بها للحلب بثلاثة دنانير فضة، وبقروهم الجواميس، ورأيت الدجاج السمان تباع بحساب ثمان بدرهم واحد، وفراخ الحمام يباع خمسة عشر، منها بدرهم - ورأيت الكيش السمين يباع بدرهمين، ورطل السكر بأربعة دراهم، وهو رطل دهل، ورطل الجلاب بثمانية دراهم ورطل السمن بأربعة دراهم ورطل الشيرج بدرهمين، ورأيت ثوب القطن الرقيق الجيد الذي ذرعه ثلاثون ذراعاً يباع بدينارين، ورأيت الجارية المليحة للفراس تباع بدينار من الذهب واحد، وهو دیناران ونصف دینار من الذهب المغربي، واشتریت بنحو هذه القيمة جارية تسمى عاشورة، وكان لها جمال بارع، واشترى بعض أصحابي غلاماً صغير السن حسناً اسمه لؤلؤ بدینارين من الذهب -

<sup>2</sup> *Ratl* as a standard of measure is no longer in vogue in the south-Asian subcontinent. While it continues to be a standard of weight in some Middle-Eastern countries, it varies from country to country. Some examples are: Egyptian *ratl* - 449.29 grams; Syrian *ratl* - 3.202 Kgs.; Beirut and Aleppo - 2.566 Kgs. One significant clue given by Ibn Baṭūṭa is that one Delhi *ratl* is equivalent to 20 Moroccan *ratls* and that 50 Delhi *ratls* are equivalent to 10 *qintārs*. In north Africa (Tunisia) a *qintār* is equal to 53.9 Kg. or to take a round figure 54 kgs. A Delhi *ratl* would thus work out to be  $(54 \times 10 \div 50 = 10.8 \text{ Kgs.})$

<sup>3</sup> The silver coins of the period vary in weight from 155 to 164 grains. They do not however contain any indication whether they are the silver *dinārs* of the time. Taking them to be so, the price of one of such coins would be between 7 and 10 rupees.

8 fat chickens .....	at Rs. $\frac{7}{8}$ (1 <i>dirham</i> )
15 pegions .....	at Rs. $\frac{7}{8}$ (1 <i>dirham</i> )
1 fat sheep .....	at Rs. $1\frac{3}{4}$ (2 <i>dirhams</i> )
1 good milch cow .....	at Rs. 21 (3 <i>silv. din.</i> )
Rose-water approx. 14 seers (1 Delhi <i>ratl</i> )	at Rs. 7 (1 <i>dinār</i> )
Fine cotton cloth 30 cubits .....	at Rs. 14 (2 <i>dinārs</i> )

The account thus given by Ibn Baṭūṭa shows that Bangālāh during that period was a very prosperous and rich land of which the countryside along the river through which he journeyed looked so full of lively villages and gardens with various crops and commodities that he felt as though he was passing through a market. Here things were cheaper than anywhere in the then known world. It had maritime trade contacts with distant foreign countries. Sunārgāon, like Sadkāwān, was a big port from which ships sailed to far-off lands like Java. Ibn Baṭūṭa notes the various units of measures and the denominations of currencies, such as gold *dinār*, silver *dinār* and *dirham*. The prices of some of the commodities like sugar and rose-water appear to be relatively high indicating perhaps that these were not sufficiently produced in the land and were probably imported from abroad. Cotton cloth was definitely manufactured in abundance, and cotton was obviously cultivated in the country. Ibn Baṭūṭa also informs us that cotton cloth was one of the main items of export, for, after sailing for 15 days from Sunārgāon his ship arrived at a place called "Barahnakar" where he found a "settlement of Muslims from Bangālāh" and where fine cloths from Bangālāh were sold.<sup>1</sup>

### III: SULTĀN SHAMS AL-DĪN ILYĀS SHĀH (740—759/1339—1358)

As already mentioned, Ḥajī Ilyās, on capturing power at Fīrūzabād (Pandua) by the year 443 H./1342 A.C. assumed the title of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh. Muhammad Tughlaq, the Delhi Sultān, was at that time too much preoccupied with a succession of rebellions in northern and southern India to pay

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 616.

attention to Lakhnawātī. This gave an opportunity for Ilyās Shāh to consolidate his position and to extend the sphere of his jurisdiction. Shortly after having established himself at Lakhnawātī he marched against Tirhut (north Bihar), ousted the Tughlaq governor from that territory and brought it under his own control.<sup>1</sup> He followed this up by an expedition into Nepal in 747/1346 and reached as far as its capital Katmandu.<sup>2</sup> He did not, however, stay long there, nor did he annex it to his territory. He pushed his authority, however, south of Tirhut, as far as Benares, thus bringing north and part of south Bihar under his jurisdiction. According to tradition he was the founder of the town of Hajipur opposite Patna; but a number of inscriptions show that the town of Bihar itself continued to be under Delhi governors. His authority in that direction therefore did not extend beyond the Monghyr district.<sup>3</sup> The most dazzling of his military exploits was his expedition into Orissa in the course of which he advanced as far as the lake Chilka wherefrom he returned with an immense booty including 44 elephants. After completing these campaigns and annexations Ilyās Shāh directed his attention towards eastern Bengal and, as already mentioned, he established his authority over Sunārgāon by 753 H. It appears that as long as Fakhr al-Dīn was alive Ilyās Shāh did not think of annexing that territory and kept himself busy in the region to the west and south-west of Lakhnawātī.

Hardly had Ilyās brought eastern Bengal under his control than he was threatened in his position by the Delhi Sultān. Muḥammad Tughlaq died in 752 H./1351 and was succeeded by his cousin Fīrūz Shāh Tughlaq. One of the early acts of the new Sultān was to lead an expedition to Bengal in order to assert the authority of the Delhi Sultanat over it. He started from Delhi in Shawwāl 754/Nov. 1353<sup>4</sup> with a huge army including 90,000 cavalry, a very large number of infantry and a flotilla of one thousand war-boats. He proceeded by way of Oudh, Bihar and

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ* (tr. Delhi reprint, 1975), p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *J.B.O.R.S.*, 1936, pp. 81-89.

<sup>3</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> *Tabaqāt-i-Akbarī*, tr. B. De., Vol. I., p. 244.



Tirhut. Ilyās Shāh advanced into Bihar in order to check the progress of the Delhi army. It appears that he had recruited a large number of local people in his army consisting of some contingents supplied by some local Hindu chiefs. Yet he could not withstand the onslaught of the Delhi army. As Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Baranī sarcastically narrates: "The Bengal ancients in order to show that they were ready to sacrifice their lives for him [Ilyās], and standing in front of the train of that wild maniac, together with the mouldy-looking Bengali Rājāhs, they bravely threw about their arms and legs; but as soon as the battle commenced, they put from fear their fingers into their mouths, gave up standing to attention, threw away swords and arms, rubbed their fore-head on the ground, and were consumed by the swords of the enemies."<sup>1</sup> As Firūz Shāh Tughlaq next advanced towards the capital Firūzabād (Pandua), Ilyās evacuated it and took shelter in the fort of "Ekdala", identified by Westmacott with a village of the same name in the Dhanjar Parganah of Dinajpur district, about 23 miles north of Pandua. The fort occupied an area of about 25 square miles, surrounded by a broad moat formed by linking up the Chiramati river on the west and the Bāliā river on the east.<sup>2</sup> Ruins of a fort with three big tanks, one called Garh-Dīghī, or the Tank of the Fort, were noticed by Dr. Buchanan early in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> However, after having occupied the capital Firūz Shāh Tughlaq issued a proclamation guaranteeing the safety of life and property of the people, denouncing Ilyās Shāh as a rebel and transgressor of the laws of Islam and calling upon them to dissociate themselves from him. From his retreat in the fort of Ekdala Ilyās Shāh matched this proclamation by an offer of increased grants of lands, stipends and allowances to the nobility and the 'ulamā' and a promise to revert to the land revenue system of Sultān Shams al-Dīn, etc. However, Firūz Shāh advanced on the neighbourhood of the fort and after some days of skirmishing succeeded, by a show of

<sup>1</sup> Translated and quoted by Blochmann, *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> E.V. Westmacott, "Note on the site of Fort Ekdalah, District Dinajpur", *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, pp. 244-245.

<sup>3</sup> M. Martin, *Eastern India*, Vol. II, p. 640; also quoted in *ibid.*

retreat, in inducing Ilyās Shāh to come out of the fort and give battle to the Delhi army at a distance of about 14 miles from Ekdala. In the battle Ilyās Shāh was completely defeated, a large number of his army fell in the action, and he had to flee back inside the fort after leaving his umbrella and staff and 47 elephants on the battlefield. The Tughlaq Sultān was determined to raze the fort to the ground but, we are told, the piteous lamentation and supplication of the widows of the deceased soldiers and other women who appeared unveiled on the parapet so moved the Sultān that he gave up his resolution. Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Baranī states, however, that the Sultān gave up his attempt because his army complained of mosquitoes in the vicinity of Pandua, while the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* attributes it to the onset or prospect of the rainy season. Be that as it may, Ilyās Shāh was not dislodged from his position as ruler of Bengal, although he was deprived of his conquests in Bihar, to the west of Lakhnawatī. Subsequently he maintained good relations with the Tughlaq Sultān, sending to his court envoys and gifts in 756/1355, 757/1356 and 758/1357. On the last occasion the Delhi Sultān returned the compliment by sending to Ilyās Shāh some Turkish and Arabian horses and other gifts. Before these reached the hands of Ilyās Shāh, however, he died. His sending of presents to the Delhi court in each of the three years following Fīrūz Shāh Tughlaq's withdrawal rather suggests that it was not really the lamentations of the widows nor the misbehaviour of mosquitoes, but most probably Ilyās Shāh's promise to send yearly presents and his surrender of the territories west of Lakhnawati which in fact induced the Delhi Sultān to withdraw from Bengal.

A fairly large number of Ilyās Shāh's coins have come to light.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of a coin of his successor Sikandar Shāh, dated 759, (that is the same year or the year immediately following that in which Ilyās Shāh died) and issued from "Chawalistan alias Kām rūp", it has been suggested that most probably Ilyās Shāh conquered and occupied the territory towards the end of his life.<sup>2</sup> According to the *Riyāḍ*, Sultān Ilyās Shāh made in Bengal "a

<sup>1</sup> See Thomas, "Initial Coinage etc.", *J.A.S.B.*, 1867, p. 57-58.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.* II, p. 110.

reservoir in imitation of the Hauz-i-Shamsī at Delhi." Two famous preachers of Islam, Shaikh 'Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn and Shaikh Biyābānī lived at Fīrūzabād during Ilyās Shāh's reign. The last date on Ilyās's coins so far discovered is 758/1357. So he died most probably in that or early in the following year.

CHAPTER VIII  
ZENITH OF ILYĀS SHĀHĪ RULE:  
SIKANDAR SHĀH AND A'ẒAM SHĀH

I: ABŪ AL-MUJĀHID SIKANDAR SHĀH  
(759—792/1358—1391)

Ilyās Shāh was succeeded by his son Sikandar Shāh. It appears that he was chosen as heir-apparent and was allowed to issue coins in his name during the life-time of his father, for a number of coins bearing Sikandar's name and covering the last years of his father's reign, namely 750 to 758, have come to light. "It thus becomes clear", rightly points out Blochmann, "that Sikandar Shāh struck coins as prince."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand although the Persian histories assign him a reign of only nine years and some months, his coins show that he had a much longer reign of more than thirty years. Besides his above mentioned coins issued as prince, his other hitherto discovered coins extend from 759 to 792.<sup>2</sup> Several inscriptions of his reign have also come to light which show that the length of his reign given in the histories is not correct.

On coming to the throne Sikandar Shāh continued his father's policy of maintaining good relations with the Delhi Sultān and sent an envoy named Amīn Khān to Delhi and also handed over five elephants to the Delhi envoy at Firūzabād, Malik Saif al-Dīn, for their despatch to Delhi. This did not, however, satisfy Firūz Shāh Tughlaq because, we are told by the *Riyāḍ*, the latter's mind was poisoned by Zafar Khān, a Persian nobleman and son-in-law of Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn of Sunārgāon. Zafar Khān, in order to avenge the overthrow of his father-in-law's family by Ilyās Shāh and to regain the high position which he (Zafar Khān) had thereby lost, instigated Firūz Shāh Tughlaq to lead a campaign against Sikandar Shāh. Accordingly, as on the first occasion, Firūz Shāh Tughlaq marched with a huge army of cavalry, infantry and elephants towards Pandua. On his approach,

<sup>1</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 257. (See also Thomas in *J.A.S.B.*, 1867, p1. 12 & 14).

<sup>2</sup> The gaps in dates of Sikandar Shāh's hitherto discovered coins are 755, 762, 767, 768, 769, 774, 775, 777 and 778.

Sikandar betook himself with his army in the Ekdala fort. Then followed several days of indecisive skirmishing and throwing of catapults. Ultimately negotiations were opened through one A'zam Humāyūn Haibat Khān, who had previously been an officer in Bengal but was now an official under Fīrūz Shāh having, at the same time, two sons in the service of Sikandar Shāh. Humāyūn Haibat's diplomatic skill and mastery of language led to Sikandar's expression of regard in eulogistic terms for the Tughlaq Sultān and the negotiations were rounded off by a treaty of friendship and exchange of presents. Fīrūz Shāh Tughlaq returned to Delhi in 760/1359.

For the remainder of his reign Sikandar had, as it appears, no wars to fight, and he devoted this long period of peace to the construction of magnificent buildings and mosques of which the famous Adīna Mosque at Pandua is the most imposing. "It is the largest and most important Moslem building in the whole of Bengal". "To the spectator standing within the expansive quadrangular courtyard of the Adina Masjid, surrounded by its seemingly endless array of archways many of them fallen", writes Percy Brown, "the conception as a whole presents the appearance of the forum of some ancient classical city,.... with the high vaulted sanctuary on the western side simulating an imperial approach in the form of a majestic triumphal archway."<sup>1</sup> The courtyard, measuring 400 feet by 130 feet, "is enclosed within the usual ranges of pillared aisles, five bays deep on the western or sanctuary side and three on the remainder, consisting of 260 pillars in all. Moreover, the entire composition is encircled by a wall, making its outside dimensions a rectangle of 507 feet long by 285 feet wide, nearly equalling the great mosque of Damascus (eighth century)..."<sup>2</sup> The construction of the mosque was started in 766/1365 and completed in 770/1369. The inscription on the mosque recording its construction runs thus: "The mosque was ordered to be built in the reign of the great king, the wisest, the justest, the most liberal of the kings of Arabia and Persia, who

<sup>1</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture, (The Islamic Period)*, Third edition, Bombay, n.d., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

trusts in the assistance of the merciful, Abū al-Mujāhid Sikandar Shāh, the king, son of Ilyās Shāh, the king, may his reign be perpetuated till the day of promise. He wrote it on the 6th Rajab of the year seven hundred and seventy."<sup>1</sup> Several other structures built during Sikandar Shāh's reign have also escaped the ravages of time. Of these the Kotwālī Darwāzā at the southern entrance of Gaud, a vault at Gangarampur, Dinajpur,<sup>2</sup> and a mosque at Mulla Simla, Hugli,<sup>3</sup> deserve mention.



(The Adina Mosque inscription of Sikandar Shāh: reproduced from *J.A.S.B.*, 1873. Actual size 4'-9" x 10")

The text, as read by Blochmann, is as follows:

أمر ببناء العمارة هذا المسجد الجامع [مع؟] أيا في الدولة السلطان الأعظم أعلم أعذل أكرم أكمل السلاطين العرب والعجم الوثائق بتأييد الرحمن أبو المجاهد سكندر شاه سلطان بن الياس شاه السلطان خلد الله خلافة إلى يوم الموعود كتبه في التاريخ ست رجب سنة سبعين وسبعماية -

During Sikandar Shāh's reign the famous preacher of Islam, Shaikh 'Alā' al-Ḥaḡ, lived at Pandua. He is said to be a descendant of the Quraish family of Makka and an intellectual successor of another famous Shaikh of the time, Shaikh 'Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn 'Uthmān. Shaikh 'Alā' al-Ḥaḡ wielded great influence among the populace by virtue of his vast learning, unblemished character and charity so much so that the Sultān grew jealous of him and

<sup>1</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 256-257.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1872, 104-105; *E.I.M.*, 1929-30, 9-11. The inscription was prepared by Ghiyāth, the "Golden-handed", whom Blochmann supposes to be "evidently the Court Kātib of Sikandar Shāh."

<sup>3</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1870, 292.

banished him to Sunārgāon. After two years' stay there, however, the Shaikh returned to Pandua where he continued to live till the end of his life.

The closing years of Sikandar Shāh's reign appear to have been disturbed by insubordination or rebellion by his favourite son Ghiyāth al-Dīn. According to the *Riyāḍ* Ghiyāth al-Dīn had been driven into rebellion by the jealousy and machinations of a step-mother. He escaped to Sunārgāon wherefrom he ultimately unfolded the standard of rebellion. "The fact that A'zam Shāh's early coins (of A.H. 772) were struck at Mu'azzamabād", writes Blochmann, "agrees with the statement of Riyāz that he rebelled in Eastern Bengal, where he remained 'nominally subordinate or covertly resistant to paternal authority'."<sup>1</sup> Ultimately a fight took place between father and son, most probably in 792/1389, at Goalpara near Pandua in which Ghiyāth emerged victorious and Sikandar Shāh died of wounds received in the fight. According to tradition he lies buried in the chamber attached to the west wall of the Ādinā mosque.

## II: GHIYĀTH AL-DĪN A'ZAM SHĀH (792—814/1390—1411)

Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh was the greatest and most famous of the Ilyās Shāhī Sultāns of Bengal. He had a fairly long reign of about 22 years, from 792 to 813 (1390—1410) during which he devoted himself more to the task of consolidation and promotion of the cause of Islam than to conquests and annexations. The only reference to his military activity is found in the *Assam Buranjī* whose historical value is not however beyond doubt. It is stated in this work that Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh led an expedition without much success against the Kāmtā Rājā of Assam.<sup>2</sup> As mentioned above, the Sikandar Shāhī coin issued from "Chawalistan alias Kāmrūp" in 759 shows that the Muslim sway had been extended to at least some parts of Kāmrūp either towards the end of Ilyās Shāh's or early in Sikandar Shāh's reign. It is also noteworthy that the only hitherto discovered inscription

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1873, 258.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in H.B. II, 118.

of Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh has been found at village Boko, in Gauhati sub-division of Kāmrūp district.<sup>1</sup> The record is very much worn out, its date-portion and the object which it commemorates being lost. Nevertheless, as Z.A. Desai rightly points out, the inscription is very important as showing that "at one time or other during the reign of A'zam Shāh, this territory was subject to his authority. If in view of the numismatic evidence referred to above, the conquest and occupation of Kāmrūp or a certain part thereof by Sikandar Shāh is accepted as fact, the present inscription would indicate continuation of that occupation."<sup>2</sup> The expedition referred to by the *Assam Buranjī* might therefore be a sort of a border incident. Ghiyāth al-Dīn's main interest, however, lay in peace. He maintained friendly relations with the neighbouring Sultanat of Jaunpur on the one hand, and with China on the other. According to Chinese accounts<sup>3</sup> ambassadors were sent from Bengal in 1405, 1408, 1409, 1412 during A'zam Shāh's reign, and also afterwards in 1414 and 1438-39. The Chinese emperor Yong-lo reciprocated by sending several missions to Bengal between 1406 and 1413.

By far the more important work which has made Ghiyāth al-Dīn a notable figure in Muslim Bengal history was his patronage of Islam and Islamic learning, and his strict adherence to the rules of the *Sharī'at* in the administration of justice. It is on record that one day the Sultān was practising archery in the course of which an arrow accidentally hit a boy, the only son of a poor widow, which caused his death. The aggrieved widow appeared before the Qādī, Sirāj al-Dīn, and brought a charge of murder against the Sultān. The Qādī duly served summons on Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh who, in response to it, appeared before the court like an ordinarily accused person and submitted himself to judgment. The Qādī pronounced his verdict against the Sultān whereupon the latter paid the prescribed indemnity to the widow and obtained from her a formal release from the charge. When the trial was over the Qādī stood up and praised the Sultān

<sup>1</sup> *E.I. Art & Pers. Suppl.*, 1955-56, 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> *V.B.A.*, I., 1945, 97-134.



for his subservience to the law. At this Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh remarked that he would have instantly beheaded the Qādī if he was found wanting in his duty as a judge. The worthy Qādī retorted smilingly saying that His Majesty would have been scourged with lashes if he disobeyed the law!<sup>1</sup> The incident conveys the whole spirit of the administration and is reminiscent of the days of the early Khalīfas of Islam.

Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh was endowed with learning and a charitable disposition. He liberally patronized the learned and the pious. The famous preacher and 'ālim Shaikh 'Alā al-Haq, who had for some time been banished to Sunārgāon by Sikandar Shāh, lived the last years of his life at Fīrūzabād (Pandua) during Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh's reign. After 'Alā' al-Haq's death, his equally famous son and successor, Shaikh Nūr Qutb al-'Ālam, also lived at Pandua and, with the encouragement of the Sultān, carried on his educational and preaching activities. In fact Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh was a friend of the latter, both of them having in their early years studied under one Shaikh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nagorī.<sup>2</sup> From time to time the Sultān used to send suitable gifts and presents to Shaikh Nūr Qutb al-'Ālam.<sup>3</sup> Pilgrims to the holy cities of Makka and Madina received all kinds of help and patronage of the Sultān. Once Shaikh Muzaffar Balkhī, a distinguished savant and preacher of Islam living in Bihar at that time, wrote to the Sultān for a *farmān* to be issued to the port-officials at Chittagong directing them to accommodate in the first ship a band of pilgrims who had gathered round the Shaikh. The desired *farmān* was issued to the port officials and when the Shaikh arrived in Bengal with his followers on their way to the holy cities, the Sultān presented him rich garments.<sup>4</sup>

More important still, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh sent

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, pp. 106-108.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> *Rafiq al-'Ārafīn*, quoted by S. H. Askari in *Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference*, Dacca Session, 1953, p. 5; and 'Abd al-Rahmān Chishtī, *Mīrat al-Asrār* (MSS, 'Āliā Madrasa, Dacca), quoted by A. Karim, *Social History of the Muslims of Bengal down to A.D. 1538*, Dacca, 1959, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> S. H. Askari, "The correspondence of two 14th century saints [Shaikhs] of Bihar with the contemporary sovereigns of Delhi and Bengal", *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Vol. XLIII, Part 2, 1956 (pp. 1-19), pp. 14-17.

immense gifts, "more than once", to the people of the holy cities of Makka and Madina.<sup>1</sup> Besides, he had two *madrasas* built, one near the Umme-Hānī gate at Makka, and the other near the Gate of Peace (*Bāb al-Salīm*) at Madina for the dissemination of Islamic learning, and created suitable endowments for these institutions. The contemporary historian and scholar, Imām Taqī al-Dīn Al-Fāsī, who was appointed a professor at the Makka *madrasa* from its inception, records in his celebrated history of the holy city this noble deed of the Sultān as follows:<sup>2</sup> "Ghiyath al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar A'zam Shāh ibn Iskandar Shāh ... was a great king. He was endowed with learning and wealth. He sent to the two holy cities (of Makka and Madina) immense gifts, more than once. These were distributed and their benefit reached everybody. Together with these he also sent funds for the construction of two *madrasas* - one at Makka, and the other at Madina, and for purchasing properties for making endowments on them. This was done by the person who was deputed for this task. The construction of the *madrasa* at Makka was started in the month of Ramaḍān, 813 H., and before the year was over its lower and the greater portion of the upper part were completed. The building was completed in the first half of 814 H. In the month of Jamādi II of this year teaching started for students of the four *madhhabs* (schools of Islamic law). I taught the *Mālikī* group of

<sup>1</sup> Al-Fāsī, *Al-Iqd al-Thamīn Fi Tarīkh Bilād al-Aḥam*, Cairo edn., 1964, Vol. III, p. 320. Also Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi' etc.*, Cairo edn., Vol. II, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Fāsī, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-321. The text runs as follows:

أعظم شاه بن امكندر شاه السلطان غياث الدين أبو المظفر ... كان ملكاً جليلاً له حظ من العلم والخير بعث إلى الحرمين غير مرة بصدقات طائلة، ففرقت بها، وعم بذلك النعم، وبعث مع ذلك مالاً لعمارة مدرستين، مدرسة بمكة ومدرسة بالمدينة، وشراء عقار يوقف عليها، ففعل له ذلك من أمده - وكان ابتداء عمارة المدرسة بمكة في شهر رمضان سنة ثلاث عشرة وثمانماية، ولم تنقض هذه السنة حتى فرغ من عمارة سبلها، وغالب عثرها، وكملت عمارتها في النصف الأول من سنة أربع عشرة وثمانماية - وفي جمادى الآخر منها، أبتدئ فيها التدريس في المذاهب الأربعة، ودرست فيها المالكية - وكان وقفها في الحرم من هذه السنة - وفيه وقف عليها أصيلتان - أحدهما تعرف بسلمة والأخرى بالخلج وبالضيعة المعروفة بالتركان، وأربع وجاب من فرار عين هذا الضيعة، وثنتان منها يعرفان بحسين مصور ليلة ونهاره، وثنتان يعرفان بحسين يحيى ليلة ونهاره - وجعل ذلك خمسة أقسام: قسم للمدرسين الأربعة بالسوية بينهم، وثلاثة أقسام للطلبة، وهم سنون نفرًا عشرون من الشافعية وعشرون من الحنفية وعشرة من المالكية وعشرة من الخنابلة، بالسوية بينهم، والقسم الخامس، يقسم ثلاثاً: قسمان لسكان المدرسة وهم عشرة رجال وقسم لمصالحها - وكان شراء هذا الوقف وموضع المدرسة، بأثني عشر ألف مثقال ذهباً، وكان الثمن لشراء هذا الوقف والمدرسة وعمارها، خادم السلطان المذكور: بأنوت الخشي، وهو الذي نولى نفقة صدقة السلطان بمكة في سنة ثلاث عشرة وثمانماية ووقف المذكور على مصالح المدرسة داراً مقابلة لما اشتراها بخمسمائة مثقال، وعمرها في سنة أربع عشرة - وفي موسمها أشيعت بمكة وفاة السلطان غياث الدين المذكور -

students. The endowment for this institution also came into operation in the month of Muḥarram of the same year. The endowment consisted of two estates (gardens), one of them called the *Salama*, and the other called the *Hillī*, in the landed estate known as the *Rukānī*, and four water reservoirs, settled on the stream of the same landed estate. Two of the reservoirs were called the Ḥusain Maṣṣūr, day and night, and the other called the Ḥusain Yaḥyā, day and night. The income of the *waqf* was to be utilized as follows: one fifth for the four professors, equally between them; three-fifths for the students. There were sixty of them, twenty of the Shāfi school, twenty of the Ḥanafī school, ten of the Māliki and ten of the Ḥanbalī school. Their share was to be equally divided amongst them. The remaining fifth was to be divided into three parts. Two parts were to be used for the residents (i.e. care-takers, attendants etc.) of the *madrasa*, and the third part for its repair and upkeep. The purchase of these endowment properties and the land for the *madrasa* cost twelve thousand gold *mithqāls*. The person charged with authority to purchase these properties and construct the *madrasa* was the above mentioned Sultān's servant, Yāqūt, the Ḥabashī. He was the person who was also charged with the task of distributing the Sultān's gifts at Makka. In the year 813 he also purchased a house in front of the *madrasa* for its benefit at five hundred gold *mithqāls*, and erected a building on the plot in 814. In the Ḥajj season of the same year the news of the death of the said Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn was announced at Makka." Al-Fāsī further notes that the *madrasa* at Madina was built at a place called *Al-Ḥiṣn al-'Atīq* or the Old Fort near the Gate of Peace (*Bāb al-Salām*) of the Prophet's mosque and that after having completed all this work Yāqūt started on his return journey to Bengal but died on the way, at Harmuz, in the month of Rabī' I, 815.<sup>1</sup> These two *madrasas* at Makka and Madina came to be known as *Madrasāt al-Bangāliah* (the Bengali Madrasahs).<sup>2</sup> In addition to these, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn also sent, through the same Yāqūt, thirty thousand gold *mithqāls* for repairing a stream at 'Arafa, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-Ghumar* etc., Cairo edn., 1391 H., Vol. II., p. 496.

sum was duly received by the Sharīf of Makka, Hasan ibn 'Ajlān.<sup>1</sup> The latter, however, is reported to have utilized the sum in repairing another stream, that of Bazān, and two desolate reservoirs at Makka.<sup>2</sup> According to Al-Sakhāwī, the two *madrasas* were in subsequent times appropriated for personal use, the one at Makka by the ruler of Hījāj, Ibn Barakat, and the other at Madina, by the ruler of Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'ẓam Shah was a man of learning and it is on record that he used to compose verses on occasions in both Arabic and Persian. One of his Arabic couplets is quoted by Al-Sakhāwī.<sup>4</sup> There is also the well-known story that the Sultān corresponded with the celebrated poet of Persia, Hāfiz, seeking the latter's help in completing the second half of a Persian couplet and also inviting him to visit Bengal. The poet composed the second half of the couplet and sent it to the Sultān with a *ghazal*, but excused himself from travelling to his court.<sup>5</sup>

Thus for his varied interests and noble deeds and for his peaceful reign of about a quarter of a century Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'ẓam Shāh was the most outstanding figure in the early Ilyās Shāhī Sultanat of Bengal. During his reign the economic prosperity of the land noticed a few years earlier by Ibn Batūta gained further momentum so that the people remained happy and contented and the troubles and usurpations that followed shortly after A'ẓam Shāh's death did not sap the foundation of the Sultanat. Above all, his friendly relations with the Jaunpur Sultanat, his exchange of envoys with the emperor of China and his benevolent deeds at the holy cities of Makka and Madina raised his own status as well as that of the Sultanat of Bengal in the eyes of the then Muslim world. That is why he is rather elaborately noticed in the works of the contemporary Muslim historians like

<sup>1</sup> Ghulam 'Alī Azād Bilgramī, *Khazana-i-Amīrah*, Newal Kishore edition, pp. 183-184, quoted by Z. Desai in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 32, 1958, pp. 199-200.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Dawā' al-Lāmi* etc. Vol. II., p. 313.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tuhafat al-Laṭifah fi Tārīkh al-Madinat al-Sharīfah*, Cairo edn., 1958, p. 319. The couplet runs as follows:

سوادك في سواد العين لون	بحاكي	ظلمة الماء الحياة
ووجهك في الفناء كضوء البدر	تلغ	بالياي الداجنات

<sup>5</sup> *Riyād*, 105-106.

Al-Fāsī, Al-Maqrizī, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī and Al-Sakhāwī. The Sultan died, as noted by Al-Fāsī and other Arab historians, in 814/1411-12,<sup>1</sup> and not in 813, as has hitherto been supposed on the basis of his coin-dates.<sup>2</sup> In fact shortly after the construction of the madrasa at Makka the Sultān died and the news of his death was announced at the time of the Hajj of that year (814). Al-Fāsī further informs us that the confirmation of the news was received from ships arriving at Aden in the following year (815 H.)<sup>3</sup> According to the *Riyāḍ* the Sultān was "treacherously murdered by Rājā Kāns", an *amīr* at the court; but such a violent death of the Sultān is not indicated by any of the contemporary Arab historians mentioned above, though in view of the Rājā's ambitious role, which will be noticed shortly, the *Riyāḍ*'s information does not seem to be unreasonable. Al-Sakhāwī mentions, however, that the Sultān's minister, Khān-i-Jahān Yahyā, was murdered in the same year in which the Sultān died.<sup>4</sup> This shows that towards the end of A'zam Shāh's reign a struggle for power was developing. Most probably the minister fell a victim to the machinations of the Rājā.

### III: CONFUSION AFTER A'ZAM SHĀH'S DEATH

Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh's death was indeed followed by confusion and political turmoils caused by Rājā Kāns's attempt to grab power and subvert the Muslim rule in Bengal. A'zam Shāh was succeeded by his son Saif al-Dīn Ḥamza Shāh<sup>5</sup> who was most probably selected as heir-apparent and allowed to issue coins in his father's lifetime.<sup>6</sup> Ḥamza Shāh is described in the histories as Sultān al-Salātīn; and a number of his coins have also come to light.<sup>7</sup> These coins were issued from the capital city (Fīrūzabād) as well as from Sātgaon and Mu'azzamabād (eastern Bengal). Their

<sup>1</sup> See Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'* etc., II, 496; Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi'* etc., III, 313, *Al-Tuhfat* etc., 319.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.*, II., 119.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Fāsī, *op. cit.*, 322.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi'*, X., 240.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'* etc., II., 496; Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi'*, VIII, 280.

<sup>6</sup> One of Ḥamza Shāh's coins is dated 813. It was minted at Sātgaon. See *Cat. II. Suppl.*, 53, No. 109.

<sup>7</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 259; *Cat. II.*, 160, Nos. 87-88; *Cat. II. Suppl.*, 53-55, Nos. 107-120.

dates do not go beyond 814, the year of his succession. On the coins he describes himself as "The one assisted by the assistance of the Merciful, sword of the world and of religion, Abū al-Mujāhid Ḥamza Shāh, son of A'zam Shāh, son of Sikandar Shāh, son of Ilyās Shāh", and also as "The Helper of Islam and the Muslims". If these expressions, especially the latter, have any significance, Ḥamza Shāh may be said to have identified himself with the Islamic party at the court as against that of the Rājā. The latter succeeded however in removing or killing Ḥamza Shāh, most probably in the same year (814). Kāns was not allowed to have his way without a struggle. Shihāb al-Dīn, a *mamlūk* (slave) of Ḥamza Shāh, led a revolt against Kāns and for a time succeeded in confining him and eclipsing his authority.<sup>1</sup> Shihāb then assumed the title of Sultān and issued coins in his name from both Fīrūzabād and Sārgāon.<sup>2</sup> Like Ḥamza Shāh Shihāb al-Dīn also describes himself on the coins as the "One assisted by the assistance of the Merciful, Shihāb al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Bāyazīd Shāh, the Sultān", and as "Helper of the Commander of the Faithful and the aid of Islam and the Muslims." His coins cover each of the years 815, 816 and 817. In 817/1414 Rājā Kāns turned the table upon him, killed him and usurped power. Shihāb al-Dīn Bāyazīd Shāh's son, 'Alā' al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh kept up the resistance to Kāns's usurpation, most

<sup>1</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lamī'*, VIII, 280. The text reads:

نار عليه شهاب مملوك سيف الدين حمزة بن غياث الدين اعظم شاه ... فقلبه في نجاته واسره.

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī also alludes to the struggle between Kāns (*Inba'*, II, 196) and Shihāb al-Dīn, but states that Ḥamza was removed by Shihāb. This, as Z. Desai (*op. cit.*, 201-202) points out, must have been a mistake which was corrected by Al-'Asqalānī's pupil Al-Sakhāwī.

<sup>2</sup> *Cat. II*, 160, Nos. 89-92; *Cat. II. Suppl.*, 55, Nos. 121-132. Blochmann, who first noticed some of these coins (*J. A. S. B.*, 1873, 262-263) thought that Shihāb al-Dīn Bāyazīd was a "puppet king" in whose name Rājā Kāns ruled in the "Darul Islam" of Bengal, for, Blochmann observed, "history and legends" did not mention any "successful rival of Kāns" by the name of Shihāb etc. Obviously Blochmann said so because of his unawareness of the Arabic sources quoted above. As we now know that Shihāb, Ḥamza Shāh's slave, was for sometime a successful rival of Rājā Kāns, these coins may be safely attributed to this Shihāb al-Dīn. It may also be noted that both Hamilton Buchanan, who wrote on the basis of a Pandua manuscript (Martin's *Eastern India*, II, 618), and the *Riyāḍ* (p. 110) mention a ruler between Ḥamza Shāh's rule and Kāns's usurpation. Buchanan clearly mentions this intermediate ruler as Shihāb al-Dīn, a slave of Ḥamza Shāh. His account thus tallies with that of the contemporary Arab historians and is not therefore "a careless and incorrect summary of" the *Riyāḍ*, as Jadunath Sarkar terms it (*J. B.*, II, 123). Nor is the *Riyāḍ*'s account unreliable, though it is not quite sure about the name of this intermediate ruler and writes: "And some writers have asserted that this Shamsuddin was no son of the Sultanussalātin, but an adopted son, and that his name was Shihābuddin."

probably basing himself in east and south Bengal wherefrom (Sātgaon, Mu'azzamabād) his coins were issued in the same year (817).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cat. II. Suppl.*, 58-59, Nos. 133-134. See also *infra*, p. 152.

## CHAPTER IX

### RĀJĀ KĀNS AND JALĀL AL-DĪN MUḤAMMAD SHĀH

#### I. USURPATION BY RĀJĀ KĀNS AND HIS END

The usurpation of power by Rājā Kāns is the most intriguing episode in the history of Muslim Bengal. The origin and background of his rise to power in the Ilyās Shāhī court at Firūzabād (Pandua) is not definitely known; though it may be assumed that his rise in general was due to the plicy of the Ilyās Shāhī rulers in entrusting Hindus with positions of responsibility and trust — a policy against which some of the *'ulamā'* had of course uttered timely warnings.<sup>1</sup> The contemporary Arab historians Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī and Al-Sakhāwī refer to the incident, but they do not give us any detail, concentrating as they do their attention more particularly on the conversion of Kāns's son to Islam and the latter's succession to the Sultanat of Bengal under the name of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh. The information supplied by the later Delhi historians like Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad Bakhshī, Abū al-Faḍl and Firishta, is sketchy and incidental, and is also faulty in respect of chronology and facts. The only detailed information about the episode is supplied by Ghulam Husain Salīm in his *Riyāḍ al-Salātīn* (written about 1788 A.C.) and by Dr. Hamilton Buchanan, who compiled his account about 1810 on the basis of a manuscript history found at Pandua. Based on local traditions and facts preserved in the families of some *shaikhs* who were contemporary with the Rājā, these two accounts are more reliable than the rather careless and casual notices in the Delhi chronicles. Moreover these two accounts are corroborated in their essential features by the contemporary Arab historians mentioned above. On the basis of these two sets of accounts we may obtain a tolerably clear idea about the episode.

The *Riyāḍ al-Salātīn* calls Kāns the "Rājā of Bhaturiā". This territory has not yet been clearly identified. Blochmann thought it to be somewhere lying to the east of Malda.<sup>2</sup> All the authorities,

<sup>1</sup> See the Bihar *Ulm*. Muzaffar Shams Bakkaī's letter to Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh, quoted by S.H. Askari in *J.H.R.S.*, 1956, Part II.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, pp. 263-264.



however, name the usurper as "Kāns", the Arab historians calling him "Kas" or "Fandu".<sup>1</sup> It was E. V. Westmacott, an English civil servant at Dinajpur in the early seventies of the nineteenth century, who first suggested that "Kāns" should be read "Ganesh", who was most probably a Raja of "Dynwaj" or Dinajpur.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent writers accepted this suggestion and began to use the revised name "Ganesh" instead of Kāns, one of them even holding that the Rājā's name was carelessly written in the Persian manuscripts "with *Kāf* instead of *Gāf*", and that no Hindu could "name his son Kānsa, the tyrant who tried to murder the god Krishna".<sup>3</sup> It is, however, a little strange that all the contemporary or near-contemporary historians should have been uniformly careless in writing the name, particularly when the sound of the Sanskrit or Bengali letter *Ga* could be easily represented, phonetic subtleties apart, by the Arabic letter *Ghain* or the Persian letters *Ghain* and *Gāf*. Moreover, the assumption that "Kāns" stands for 'Kānsa', the tyrant of the Hindu mythology, is purely imaginary. If the historians meant the name to be Kānsa, they would have added an *alif* with the last letter *śīn* (كأنسا), as is the general practice in writing such names in Arabic and Persian. Hence the suggestion of Col. Dalton that the name "Kāns" stands for "Kons" or "Konch", the "same as Koch (Koch Bihar)"<sup>4</sup> seems more plausible. "Koch is often pronounced with a nasal twang", rightly points out Blochmann, "as if it were spelt Kōns."<sup>5</sup> Kuch Bihar lies to the north-east of Rangpur and at that time bordered the Sultanat of Bengal. It is not unlikely that a chieftain of Kuch origin was offered the position of a noble for some consideration at the Ilyās Shāhī court. Clearly the expression 'Rājā Kāns' appears to be a popular or surname, rather than the full and original name of the usurper, and it is obviously more reasonable to use the name as written by all the historians than to attribute a general carelessness on the part of all of them.

<sup>1</sup> Ziauddin Desai (*op. cit.*, p. 201-202) reasonably supposes that the name "Fandu" might have been a confusion for Panuda.

<sup>2</sup> *Calcutta Review*, No. CX, Oct. 1872, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> *H.B.* II, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 263, n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

The rise of Rājā Kāns has to be understood against the background of the overall political situation in the subcontinent at that time. The Ilyās Shāhī Sultanat came into being more or less as a sequel to the troubles and rebellions that beset the later years of Muhammad Tughlaq's reign. In order to resist the attempt of the next Tughlaq Sultān, Firūz Shāh Tughlaq, to recover Bengal, Ilyās Shāh and his son Sikandar Shāh had perforce to make local recruits and rally the support of local Hindu chiefs. It is significant that Baranī speaks about "mouldy looking Bengali Rājās" in the army of Ilyās Shāh when he unsuccessfully met Firūz Shāh Tughlaq's army in Bihar. This dependence upon local recruits might explain the appointment of Rājā Kāns, and probably some other nobles, at the Ilyās Shāhī court. The seemingly unexpected good relationship which both Ilyās Shāh and Sikandar Shāh cultivated with the Tughlaq Sultān even after his clearly unsuccessful campaigns in Bengal rather suggests that the Bengal Sultāns were not quite unaware of the inherent danger of their policy of dependence upon Hindu elements. Secondly, the break-up of the Tughlaq Sultanat at the time and the rise of a number of succession Sultanats, of which the Ilyās Shāhī Sultanat itself was one, left the Muslims divided and weakened throughout the subcontinent. And the disintegration and isolation of the Muslims were complete when, shortly after Firūz Shāh Tughlaq's death, Timur Lane sacked Delhi in 1398 A.C. Rājā Kāns, who was undoubtedly an intelligent and ambitious person, did not fail to keep an eye on the course of developments.<sup>1</sup> Particularly the rise of the Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagr on the ruins of the Tughlaq authority in the south about this time must not have escaped Rājā Kāns's attention who seems have been actuated by a similar desire to supplant Muslim rule in Bengal too.

The rise of the Rājā was thus neither an unintelligible nor an unconnected event. As indicated above, he came to prominence in the Ilyās Shāhī court towards the close of Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh's reign. Whether the latter was murdered by Kāns, as related

<sup>1</sup> That the isolation of the Bengal Sultanat from the centre of Muslim power was an important factor in Kāns's calculation appears clearly by his prompt submission as soon as the Muslims succeeded in getting the help of the Jaunpur Sultān. See below.

by the *Riyād*, or died peacefully, the murder of his able minister Khān-i-Jahān Yahyā shortly after the Sultān's death in 814/1411-12 brought Kāns in the forefront of the struggle for power. During the short reign of Saif al-Dīn Ḥamza Shāh it assumed a more acute form. The Rājā either removed Ḥamza Shāh from the throne and killed him, or concentrated power in his hand by completely relegating the prince into the background. This led Shihāb al-Dīn, a *mawla* of Ḥamza Shāh, to oppose the Rājā. For a time Shihāb succeeded in overpowering and confining the Rājā, and in taking power in his hand under the name of Sultān Shihāb al-dīn Bāyazīd Shāh. Ultimately, however, the Rājā gained the upper hand, overthrew and killed Shihāb<sup>1</sup> in 817/1414, and "openly ascended the throne after crushing the Islamic party in the state"<sup>2</sup> and also killing, most probably, Bāyazīd's son 'Alā' al-Dīn Firūz Shāh, who kept up the resistance to Rājā Kāns's usurpation for sometime, as is evidenced by his coins issued from Mu'azzamābād and Sātgaon in 817.<sup>3</sup> The struggle thus lasted for at least four years, from 814 to 817, in the course of which the minister Khān-i-Jahān Yahyā, Sultān Saif al-dīn Ḥamza Shāh, the latter's slave and Sultān Shihāb al Dīn Bāyazīd Shāh, and his son, prince 'Alā' al-Dīn Firūz Shāh, besides presumably others, fell bloody victims to the machinations of the Rājā.

Coming to the throne as he did for the purpose of supplanting Muslim rule, Rājā Kāns followed a systematic policy of elimination of and persecution upon the Muslims, particularly those who mattered in public affairs. "Oppression and bloodshed followed;" writes the *Riyād*, "he tried to kill all Muslims, and had many learned men murdered." It is related that Shaikh Badr al-Islām and his son Faiz al-Islām, who refused to pay homage to the Rājā, were summoned at court and on their persistence in

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' etc.*, Vol. II, p. 196; *Riyād*, p. 110; Hamilton Buchanan's account, Martin's *Eastern India*, Vol. II., p. 618. Al-Sakhāwī's statement (*Al-Daw'u etc.*, Vol. VIII, p. 280) that Shihāb was killed by Kāns's son after becoming a Muslim is clearly a confusion on the historian's part.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.* II, p. 121. Dr. A.H. Dani tries to show, by an interpretation of the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*'s expression استیلا یافتہ that Kāns did not in fact assume kingship ("The House of Rājā Ganesh in Bengal", *J.A.S.B.*, letters, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, p. 127, 135); but this view is not correct and is categorically contradicted by the contemporary Arabic sources and other historians.

<sup>3</sup> *Cat.* II., suppl. pp. 58-59, Nos. 133-134.

refusing to acknowledge his supremacy, were executed. The same day a boat-load of learned men were also drowned to death at the orders of the Rājā.<sup>1</sup> He also destroyed many mosques. The subsequent developments, as narrated by both the *Riyād* and Hamilton Buchanan, are as follows. The persecution and oppression of the Rājā at last drove the Muslims to rally round Shaikh Nūr Qutb al-‘Ālam, the leading *Shaikh* in Bengal at the time. The latter then addressed an appeal to the Jaunpur Sultān, Ibrāhīm, detailing the plight of the Muslims in Bengal and imploring him to come to their rescue. Accordingly the latter marched with his army into Bengal and pitched his tent at Sarāi Firūzpūr. Unable to resist the Jaunpur forces, and seeing no other way out of the crisis, Rājā Kāns submitted to Nūr Qutb al-‘Ālam and begged him to intercede with the Jaunpur Sultān. The *Shaikh* consented to do so if only the Rājā embraced Islam. The latter at first agreed to do so, but being misled by his wife, offered his son, Jadu, to be converted and placed on the throne. The *Shaikh* then converted Jadu to Islam, gave him the name of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, placed him on the throne and then persuaded the Jaunpur Sultān to withdraw from Bengal. After the latter's withdrawal, however, Rājā Kāns confined his son, and in order to reinstate him into Hinduism, "made several hollow cows of gold, threw Jalāl into the mouth of one, and pulled him out behind; the gold was then distributed among the Brahmans. He hoped that the boy would thus return to his old faith. But as Jalāl had been converted to Islam by a *Shaikh* like Nūr Qutb al-‘Ālam, he remained faithful to his new belief, and the talk of the infidels made no impression upon him". Rājā Kāns now again commenced to persecute the Muslims. His persecution reached the climax when he arrested Nūr Qutb al-‘Ālam's son Shaikh Anwar, and his brother's son Shaikh Zāhid, both of whom were banished to Sunārgāon. After some time Shaikh Anwār was executed at the Rājā's orders. That very day, however, Rājā Kāns was overthrown and killed by his son Jalāl al-Dīn who then succeeded to the throne.

The outlines of the episode thus given in the *Riyād* and Buchanan's account agree well with the numismatic evidence that

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, pp. 110-112.

has come to light and with the account of the contemporary Arab historians. Coins of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad dated 818 and 821 to 823 have been discovered, with a gap for the years 819 and 820; whereas some coins with Bengali characters and issued by "Danuj Mardan Dev" and "Mahendra Dev" with the Śaka dates 1339 and 1340, corresponding to 820 and 821 H., have been discovered. On these coins "Danuj Mardan" and "Mahendra" describe themselves as "devoted to the feet of Chandī" (Hindu goddess Kālī). It has been reasonably suggested that "Danuj Mardan Dev" is the name which Rājā Kāns assumed after capturing the throne<sup>1</sup> and that "Mahendra" was most probably a younger son of Rājā Kāns.<sup>2</sup> Now, several points emerge clearly from these coins. First, Jalāl al-Dīn's coins dated 818 clearly prove that his conversion and assumption of the royal privilege of issuing coins took place in that year at the latest, that is only a few months after the usurpation of power by Kāns. Obviously the latter could not continue for long in his ill-gotten power in the first instance and that within a short time events took such a turn that he had to step down and allow his son to embrace Islam and issue coins in his new name of Jalāl al-Dīn. Nothing short of physical force and a real threat of annihilation could have compelled the ambitious Rājā to accept this position. Hence the story of Shaikh Nūr Quṭb al-'Ālam's intervention and the advance of the Jaunpur army upon Bengal cannot but be true. Secondly, the gap in Jalāl al-Dīn's coinage for the years 819 and 820, coupled with the existence of Danuj Mardan Dev's coins of 820 confirm the account of the *Riyāḍ* and of Buchanan that after the departure of the Jaunpur forces Rājā Kāns betrayed his pledge, placed Jalāl al-Dīn under restraint, probably trying to readmit him into Hinduism by performing some prescribed rites, and began himself to exercise royal power by issuing coins in his newly assumed name of "Danuj Mardan Dev". Thirdly, the fact that he did away with the Hijrī era and Arabic character, used the Śaka era, and assumed the "highly significant"<sup>3</sup> title of "Danuj Mardan Dev" and one

<sup>1</sup> N.K. Bhattasali, *Coins and Chronology etc.*, pp. 117-121.

<sup>2</sup> Stapleton in 'Ābid 'Āli, *Memoirs of Gaur and Pandua*, p. 29, note.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase is Jadunath Sarkar's, *H.B.*, II., p. 121.

"Devoted to the feet of Chandi", the Hindu goddess of bloody vengeance upon all her opponents, tend only to emphasize the correctness of the *Riyāḍ*'s statement that the Rājā was bent upon banishing Islam and the Muslims and in carrying out a systematic persecution upon them. Lastly, the reappearance of Jalāl al-Dīn's coinage from the year 821 shows that reaction against Kāns's oppressive rule developed within a couple of years and that he was definitely overthrown in 821. Obviously the Muslims rallied round Jalāl al-Dīn, who was steadfast in his faith and who led the revolution against his father and recaptured the throne after putting him to death. That the Rājā was violently overthrown and killed is not only stated by the *Riyāḍ*, but also by the contemporary Arab historian Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī who specifically states that Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammed revolted against his father and killed him.<sup>1</sup> That the transition was anything but peaceful is also suggested by the coins of "Mahendra" of the Śaka year 1340 (821 H.). According to Stapleton and others, Mahendra was a younger son of Rājā Kāns who was set up as a rival king by Hindu ministers but who, before long, had to give way to Jalāl al-Dīn.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Rājā Kāns's attempt to supplant Muslim rule was frustrated. Considering the time and circumstances in which he acted, he was definitely a bold and adventurous person and his persecutory role was not also unnatural. Some modern Hindu scholars have, however, attempted to offer apologies for the Rājā. The foremost of these is the late Sir Jadunath Sarkar's "modern reconstruction of the history of Ganesh", as he calls it.<sup>3</sup> It is avowedly based on his "historical imagination", because, according to him the *Riyāḍ* and Hamilton Buchanan's account were not reliable and because he thought "no inscription of Ganesh or Jalaluddin... nor any fifteenth century writing about them" were forthcoming. The existence of the contemporary Arab historians' accounts on the subject and the discovery of at least two

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbāʾ* etc., Vol. II., p. 496. The text runs thus:

ثم ثار عليه ولد قتلوه وتسمى «محمد» واسلم وتلقب جلال الدين أبا المظفر.

<sup>2</sup> Stapleton's note in 'Ābid 'Alī, *op. cit.*, p. 29

<sup>3</sup> *H.B.*, II., pp. 125-128.

inscriptions of Jalāl al-Dīn<sup>1</sup> should at once render Sarkar's interpretation obsolete. Yet some of his inconsistencies and the way in which he has in effect accepted and then distorted the facts supplied by the *Riyāḍ* and Hamilton Buchanan may be noted. Sarkar imagines that by virtue of his "ability and experience" and his personal infantry "Ganesh naturally became the *de facto* ruler of the state" when Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh left "only raw youths for his successors". This, says Sarkar, "naturally set up against" the Rājā "the mothers of the other princes and the disappointed nobles who followed the fortunes of the latter. Plots against Ganesh and attempts to stir up civil war resulted and the cypher Sultan may have been lured into rising against his regent... At the very last, Ganesh, (now an old man), assumed the crown himself in 817 A.H."<sup>2</sup> It should be at once pointed out that the usurpation by Kāns was undoubtedly due to the inefficiency of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's successors and the division and disunity among the Muslim nobility, besides the overall political situation in the subcontinent indicated above, and that Kāns might even have drawn some Muslim nobles to his faction; but the suggestion that he "naturally" became the *de facto* ruler simply because of the weakness of the princes and that he was rather an unwilling occupant of the throne in consequence of plots and risings against his "natural" position of *de facto* ruler and "regent" is obviously far too much of an apology for him. All the extant sources rather show clearly that he came to occupy the position which he did by clever machinations resulting in a series of murders. If Kāns became the *de facto* ruler after Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh's death, it was by no means without calculated moves on Kāns's part. Secondly, Sarkar characterizes the accounts of the *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* and of the Pandua manuscript which Hamilton Buchanan used as "pious frauds". Yet Sarkar accepts directly or indirectly all the essential facts in these two sources and then distorts them in his own way. Thus he accepts the fact of Shaikh Nūr Quṭb al-'Ālam's invitation to the Jaunpur Sultān but then casts doubt on the latter's having come in person and then

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.*, II, p. 126.

hastenes to add that "that does not necessarily mean that no general of the Jaunpur kingdom led an army into Bengal." Having said so Sarkar ingenuously suggests that the "Jaunpur force went back, probably for a money consideration and certainly on the promise that Ganesh would convert his son Jadusen to Islam and make him Sultan of Bengal in his own place."<sup>1</sup> Now, whether the Jaunpur Sultān did personally come or sent an army under a general is not *that* important as *is the fact* that the Jaunpur intervention was brought about by Nūr Quṭb al-‘Ālam’s appeal. That being the position, it is not understandable why that army could have withdrawn without having made a satisfactory settlement of the question which had necessitated their coming here. Sarkar does not indicate any source wherefrom he got the hint of Kāns’s having recourse to bribery in order to ward off the danger. In fact Sarkar projects this imagination of his in order to lend support to his another imaginary point that Jalāl al-Dīn (Jadusen) embraced Islam *after* Kāns’s death. In this connection Sarkar twists the vague expression of *Firishta*,<sup>2</sup> which has long been regarded as faulty on this subject.<sup>3</sup> Yet Sarkar accepts the *Riyād*’s story about the purificatory ceremony for readmitting Jalāl al-Dīn into the fold of Hinduism and then adds: "we may be quite sure that the backward Hindu society of those early days refused to accept *sudhi* (reconversion to Hinduism) however richly gilt."<sup>4</sup> Clearly Sarkar here fails to see his own inconsistency; for the question of the purificatory ceremony does not arise unless Kāns’s son had embraced Islam as a condition precedent for the withdrawal of the Jaunpur forces. That Jalāl al-Dīn (Jadusen) embraced Islam at the latest by 818 is proved by his coins of that date which, according to Sarkar’s own admission is much prior to Kāns’s death. But then Sarkar presents his skilfully woven inconsistency to his readers in order to press his next imaginary point that "Kāns died in old age, not murdered by his son Jalaluddin as piously imagined by Ghulam Husain Salim on the ‘gossip of some’ (ba qaul-i-ba’ze)" and that Jalāl al-Dīn went over

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> See *J. A. S. B.*, 1873, p. 264, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *H. B.*, II., p. 127.



to the Muslim society because he was not accepted by the Hindus.<sup>1</sup> As pointed out above, Ghulām Ḥusain's statement in this regard has for its solid support the categorical statement of the contemporary historian Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī who unequivocally mentions that Jalāl al-Dīn revolted against his father and killed him. Sarkar's rendering of Ghulām Ḥusain's phrase "ba qaul-i-ba'de" is palpably tendentious; its plain meaning is not "gossip of some", but "according to another statement" which, as it is now clear, has reference either to the contemporary account noted above, or to some other work based on it. Obviously it was not Ghulām Ḥusain Salīm who indulged in "pious imagination", but rather Sarkar who piously imagines a peaceful death for Rājā Kāns. In fact Sarkar accepts directly or indirectly all the material facts supplied by Ghulām Ḥusain Salīm, such as Nūr Quṭb al-'Ālam's appeal to the Jaunpur Sultān, the latter's march upon Bengal, Rājā Kāns's submission to the demand of the *Shaikh*, conversion of Kāns's son to Islam, the story of the purificatory ceremony, etc., but Sarkar distorts each item of these facts with his imagination in order to bring home, as it appears, his main thesis that the Rājā was popular with the Muslims and did not persecute them. Yet, it is only against the background of the Rājā's persocutory role that these facts become intelligible. As already pointed out, it was only natural on the Rājā's part to turn against the Muslims. The very legend "devoted to the feet of Chandī" inscribed on his coins is an eloquent testimony to the spirit of his regime. The contemporary historian Al-Sakhāwī categorically states that Jalāl al-Dīn repaired and renewed the mosques destroyed or harmed by his father, thereby indicating that his father destroyed mosques.<sup>2</sup> Sarkar indeed falls back on *Firishta's* indirect remark about the Rājā's alleged popularity with the Muslims but ultimately admits indirectly that the Rājā did persecute the 'ulamā'. Sarkar concludes his laboured apology for Kāns thus: "The charge against him of having vowed to extirpate the *ulema* and shaikhs which we find only in the monkish legends

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Dawu'* etc., Vol. VIII., p. 280. His exact words are:

وجدد ماخرجه أبوه من المساجد ونحوها .

of Pandua and Malda, clearly sprang from his attempt to reduce the overgrown and unruly Muslim monastic orders to obedience and to squeeze out of them a portion of vast treasures they had accumulated by beguiling Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah in his old age and taking leases of the administration of districts (like Satgaon). Their position was exactly parallel to that of the Buddhist monks to whom the Emperor Asoka gave away all his state treasures in his dotage".<sup>1</sup> In this Sarkar in effect admits the truth of Ghulām Husain's statement about Kāns's persecution of the 'ulamā', particularly his execution of Nūr Qutb al-'Ālam's son Shaikh Anwar for his alleged knowledge about hidden treasures at Sunārgāon. In doing so, however, Sarkar makes a very miserable attempt to kill two birds, the Buddhist monks and the Muslim *Shaikhs*, at one throw. Whether Aśoka did actually give away all his treasures to the Buddhist monks is a moot question, but Sarkar's innuendo against the Muslim *Shaikhs* is utterly unwarranted. The *Shaikhs* of whom we get information through various sources did not in any way form themselves into such institutions as the "monastic orders" of Medieval Europe, nor were they, by all accounts, such greedy wealth-seekers as Sarkar would have us believe. Be that as it may, it is clear that even in his laboured and inconsistent apology Sarkar admits all the facts mentioned by the *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* and the Pandua manuscript of Hamilton Buchanan though he arbitrarily characterizes them as "monkish legends" and "pious frauds".

To conclude, Rājā Kāns was no innocent and unwilling participant in the episode, nor was he a friend of the Muslims. Taking advantage of the position of influence in the Muslim court which Ilyās Shāhī liberalism had afforded him, he made a deliberate and vigorous effort to emulate the founders of the Vijayanagar kingdom in the south and to supplant Muslim rule in Bengal. He did not succeed, and had his nemesis at the hand of his own son who not only did away with him but also shattered his dream of consolidating a "Chandī-dom" by himself embracing Islam and furthering its cause in a way comparable only to the

<sup>1</sup> *H.B.*, Vol. II., p. 127

record of Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shāh. Whether Jalāl al-Dīn went over to the Muslim society because the so-called "backward" Hindus of the time did not receive him within their fold is nowhere on record; but the very fact that he succeeded in alliance with Islam and the Muslims goes to show that the Muslim elements in the country, the nobility and the generality combined, constituted by that time the preponderating factor in the bodypolitic as against the non-Muslims and others.

## II: JALĀL AL-DĪN ABŪ AL-MUẒAFFAR MUḤAMMAD SHĀH

After conversion to Islam Rājā Kans's son Jadu<sup>1</sup> was given the name "Muḥammad" and was enthroned under the title "Jalāl al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar Muḥammad Shāh al-Sultān." As mentioned above, his earliest coin is dated 818/1415 on the obverse of which the above-mentioned title is recorded and on the reverse he is described as "Helper of Islam and the Muslims."<sup>2</sup> On another variety of coin of the same date he is described as the "Helper of the Amīr al-Mu'minīn, and aid of Islam and the Muslims".<sup>3</sup> These expressions are significant in the context of the circumstances under which he came to the throne. These coins also establish indisputably, despite the different views of historians regarding the time and circumstances of his conversion, that he embraced Islam and was enthroned at least in that year, so that the usurpation of Kāns did not last in the first instance for more than about a year, the last coins of the preceding Sultān Shihāb al-Dīn, and of another prince named Firūz Shāh, being dated 817/1414. Jalāl al-Dīn's effective rule began, however, from 821, after the final overthrow of Kāns and the pretender "Mahendra", most probably a younger son of the latter. The intervening period from 819 to 820 witnessed Rājā Kāns's second

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Riyad al-Salāṭīn*, his original name was Jadu. *Firishta* calls him "Jatmall" or "Jaimall", the MSS differ.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 267, Plate VIII, No. 4.

Obverse: جلال الدنيا والدين أبو المظفر محمد شاه السلطان ناصر

Reverse: الإسلام والمسلمين خلد الله ملكه

Margin: ضرب هذه المسكة . . . السنة ٨١٨

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* The Arabic expression is: ناصر أمير المؤمنين غوث الإسلام والمسلمين.

attempt to grab power. The triumph of Jalāl al-Dīn marked in fact the victory of the Islamic party. It also indicates that despite his capture of power Rājā Kāns could not carry the people with him and that the Muslim population in Bengal had by that time formed the decisive factor in moulding its political destiny.

Jalāl al-Dīn proclaimed aloud the principles of Islam in the state and himself adhered to the Ḥanafī *madhab* (school of *sharīʿat*). He reconstructed and repaired the mosques and similar other buildings destroyed or mutilated by his father, and also erected new ones.<sup>1</sup> Like Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh, he also sent money etc. to Makka, particularly in the year 832/1429, for distribution there and built an impressive *madrasa* in that holy city.<sup>2</sup> These benevolent activities at Makka were only an extension of similar measures of the Sultān in Bengal. An inscription dated 5 Jamādī I 835/12 January 1432 and found at Sultānganj in the Rajshahi district records the construction of a *Jāmiʿ* Mosque-cum-*madrasa* in that year by his governor of Sutia bearing the title of Malīk Ṣadr al-Millat. Sutia was an important trade centre, described in the inscription as a *Khās* territory (crown land), at the confluence of the Ganges and the Bhagirathi in the Murshidabad district.<sup>3</sup> The Sultān also beautified the city of Pandua with many splendid structures and it flourished so much under him that, in the words of the *Riyād*, "it cannot be sufficiently described." About the year 822 H. he transferred the capital from Pandua to Gaud which city also he adorned with similar architectural monuments, particularly a mosque, a reservoir, the "Jalālī tank" and a *Sarāi*.

For raising his status as an independent Muslim Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn established diplomatic relationship with the Timurid ruler Shāh Rukh of Herat and the Mamlūk ruler of Egypt, al-Ashraf

<sup>1</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Dawuʿ al-Lāmiʿ* etc., Vol. VIII., p. 280. Also Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ* etc., Vol. II., p. 497. Al-Sakhāwī writes:

ولحسن إسلامه أقام شعار الإسلام وجدّد ما خرّبه أبوه من المساجد ونحوها وتقلّد لأبي حنيفة وبني مائر بل عمّر  
بمكة مدرسة هائلة.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Also Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *op. cit.* The latter writes:

وارسل إلى مكة بأموال يتصدق بها سنة اثنتين وثلاثين.

<sup>3</sup> M.A. Ghafur, "Fresh light on the Sultānganj Inscription of Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh", *J.A.S.P.*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1963, pp. 66-65.

Bārsbāy. In the Sultānganj inscription noted above Jalāl al-Dīn is found using both the titles of *Sultān* and *Amīr*. It may be mentioned that this latter title is not found on any of his coins. It has therefore been suggested that he used this title in order to placate the Timurid ruler who did not recognize the 'Abbāsīd Khalīfa of Egypt and who bore the title *Amīr*, "an intermediary step between Sultān and Amīr al-Mu'minīn".<sup>1</sup> Sometime after having established the *madrassa* at Makka Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn sent gifts and presents to al-Ashraf Bārsbāy of Egypt and asked for a letter of nomination from the 'Abbāsīd Khalīfa there.<sup>2</sup> This request was granted and a formal letter of nomination, together with a robe of honour was sent to him through two messengers named Muhmil and Bargūt in 833/1440. The Sultān put on this robe and sent a letter of acknowledgement, together with money-gifts for the Khalīfa and presents for the Sultān al-Ashraf Bārsbāy. Jalāl al-Dīn also used to send gifts regularly to an worthy 'ālim of the time, Shaikh 'Alā' al-Bukhārī who lived in Egypt and Damascus. After having received the letter of nomination from the Khalīfa, Jalāl al-Dīn issued a new coin in 834/1431 assuming the title of *Khalīfat Allah* for himself.<sup>3</sup> This is very significant. It may be pointed out that because of the disintegration of the 'Abbāsīd Khalīfat some Muslim jurists of the time like Ibn Jama' and Ibn Khaldūn had suggested that there could be delegation of Caliphal prerogatives and that there might even be two *imāms* at one and the same time if there was sufficient distance between the two to preclude any possibility of conflict of jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> It has

<sup>1</sup> M.A. Ghafur, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'* etc. Vol. II., p. 497. The text runs as follows:

ثم أرسل هدية الى مصر بعدما وطلب التقليد من الخليفة فجهز له مع رسوله مهملاً وبرغوت في سنة ثلاث فأعاد جوابه سنة أربع وصحبه مال للخليفة وللسلطان هدية.

Al-Sakhāwī (*Al-Dawu'* etc., Vol. VIII., p. 280) also writes:

وأرسل الأشرف بارسبای صاحب مصر بهدية واستدعى العهد من الخليفة فجهز له مع تشریف علی بد شریف فلبس التشریف ثم أرسل للخليفة هدية وكانت هداياه متواصلة بالعلاء البخاري بمصر ودمشق.

Thus while Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī uses the words طلب التقليد, al-Sakhāwī uses the expression استدعى العهد, both meaning, however, a request for nomination as successor or deputy. The names of messengers are mentioned by the former as Muhmil and Bargūt, whereas the latter mentions that the robe and letter of nomination were sent by the hand of "Sharif", which might mean the name of a person, or a title signifying connection with the prophet's family.

<sup>3</sup> A. Karim, *Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal*, Dacca, 1960, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> Rosenthal, *Political thought in Medieval Islam*, p. 56; and Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolegomena*, tr. de Slane, Vol. I., p. 391 (both quoted in M.A. Ghafur, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65).

## CHAPTER X

### THE LATER ILYĀS SHĀHĪS AND THE ABYSSINIAN RULERS

#### I. THE LATER ILYĀS SHĀHĪS

##### (a) Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Maḥmūd

The accession of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd meant not only the restoration of the old Ilyās Shāhī dynasty, it also signified the reassertion of authority by the old Muslim nobility who had been displaced and relegated into the background since the time of Rāja Kāns's usurpation. Having been called to the throne by this group and having the advantage of their confidence and cooperation, the new Sultān had a rather smooth reign of twenty years. During this period peace and prosperity prevailed throughout the country. The external situation also was favourable for Maḥmūd. Hitherto the Jaunpur Sultānat in northern India had been a rival of the Bengal Sultānat since the time of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh; but now that Sultānat was involved in a deadly struggle with the Lūdī Sultāns of Delhi. This new situation afforded Bengal its much needed security on the western frontier and enabled Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd to devote his time and attention to the tasks of reconstruction and development. And he indeed fruitfully utilized the opportunity so that the land witnessed significant social and economic developments during his time.

The most important social development during Maḥmūd's reign was a steady expansion of Muslim colonization and settlement in different parts of Bengal, specially in its southern region. The leader of this process of Muslim settlements in south Bengal was Khān Jahān whose tomb exists near Bagerhat, the headquarters of a subdivision of that name in the Khulna district. The inscription attached to the tomb says that Khān Jahān died in the end of Dhu al-Hijjah, 863 (end of October 1459 A.C.).<sup>1</sup> About a mile to the south-west of his tomb lies the imposing sixty-dome mosque, still in a good state of preservation, erected by him.

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1867, pp. 130-135.

Rabī' II, 837 and that he was succeeded in that year by his son Aḥmad.<sup>1</sup> According to Ghulām Ḥusain Salīm, Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn lies buried in the famous *Ek-Lākhī* tomb at Pandua, a square single domed structure of which each side is about 87 feet, with a single arch spanning it, which is also said to contain the tombs of his wife and son.

### III: SHAMS AL-DĪN ABŪ AL-MUJĀHID AḤMAD SHĀH

On Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh's death his son Aḥmad ascended the throne in 837/1433-34. He was then only 14 years old.<sup>2</sup> His young age, and probably evil counsels, led him astray and he soon indulged in "crimes and follies". He was thus a poor successor to his illustrious father. When his follies and cruelties despaired everybody, we are told, two of his slaves, Shādi Khān and Nāṣir Khān, whom he had raised to positions of power and influence, made a conspiracy against him and killed him. The conspirators then fell out amongst themselves and tried to kill each other. In this struggle Nāṣir Khān succeeded in eliminating Shādi Khān and in arrogating to himself the royal authority. At this stage, however, the nobility consisting of the *amīrs* and *malīks* asserted themselves. They refused to obey the usurper Nāṣir Khān, had him killed only about a week after his assumption of power and then restored to the throne a descendant of Ilyās Shāh named Maḥmūd<sup>3</sup> who, according to Firishṭa, had taken to agriculture and had been living in obscurity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daww' etc.*, Vol. II, p. 166; Vol. VIII, p. 280; and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'* etc., Vol. II., p. 497.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād.*, 117-118; *Ṭabaqāt*, III., 234-236.

<sup>4</sup> *Firishṭa*, II., 579.

## CHAPTER X

### THE LATER ILYĀS SHĀHĪS AND THE ABYSSINIAN RULERS

#### I. THE LATER ILYĀS SHĀHĪS

##### (a) Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Maḥmūd

The accession of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd meant not only the restoration of the old Ilyās Shāhī dynasty, it also signified the reassertion of authority by the old Muslim nobility who had been displaced and relegated into the background since the time of Rāja Kāns's usurpation. Having been called to the throne by this group and having the advantage of their confidence and cooperation, the new Sultān had a rather smooth reign of twenty years. During this period peace and prosperity prevailed throughout the country. The external situation also was favourable for Maḥmūd. Hitherto the Jaunpur Sultānat in northern India had been a rival of the Bengal Sultānat since the time of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh; but now that Sultānat was involved in a deadly struggle with the Lūdī Sultāns of Delhi. This new situation afforded Bengal its much needed security on the western frontier and enabled Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd to devote his time and attention to the tasks of reconstruction and development. And he indeed fruitfully utilized the opportunity so that the land witnessed significant social and economic developments during his time.

The most important social development during Maḥmūd's reign was a steady expansion of Muslim colonization and settlement in different parts of Bengal, specially in its southern region. The leader of this process of Muslim settlements in south Bengal was Khān Jahān whose tomb exists near Bagerhat, the headquarters of a subdivision of that name in the Khulna district. The inscription attached to the tomb says that Khān Jahān died in the end of Dhu al-Hijjah, 863 (end of October 1459 A.C.).<sup>1</sup> About a mile to the south-west of his tomb lies the imposing sixty-dome mosque, still in a good state of preservation, erected by him.

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1867, pp. 130-135.



There are also two very large tanks, excavated by him, one by the side of his tomb and the other near the sixty-dome mosque. The latter tank is popularly known as the Ghorā Dīghi or Horse-tank because of its length which is said to equal a horse's run. A glance at the whole landscape of the area shows that he undertook a systematic work of settlement and colonization by constructing mosques, excavating tanks and adopting similar other public measures, which must have taken a considerably long time to accomplish.<sup>1</sup> The size of the sixty-dome mosque itself shows that the Muslim population for whose use it was constructed was large indeed. About twenty miles to the west of the sixty-dome mosque there is another mosque, much smaller in size and with a single dome, but similar in design and building materials,<sup>2</sup> flanked on its south by four separate structures said to contain tombs of four *Shaikhs*, together with a tank to the east of these structures. These are situated in Shubhadia, one of the westernmost villages of the Bagerhat subdivision. According to popular tradition still current in the locality, these were also the works of Khān Jahān. The lands attached to the mosque, tombs and the tank are *la-kharāj* (rent free) held by a family in the village, said to be descendants of the original *mutawallis* (caretakers) and bearing the family title *Faqīr*.<sup>3</sup> The tombs are now completely razed to the ground, but the mosque is still used by the local people for daily and *jum'a* prayers. About a furlong to the north, in the same village, lie the ruins of an *'Īd-gāh*, also erected at the instance of the same Khān Jahān. The *'Īd-gāh* is, however, completely in ruins and covered by trees and bushes. About a mile to the west of this village, there was another mosque, in village Gaurambha, which has however been washed away by the river running by its side. The surrounding area, however, is much higher than the rest of the village, indicating clearly that it once contained old structures. It appears that the Subhadia region was yet another subsidiary settlement established at the instance of Khān Jahān.

<sup>1</sup> It has been wrongly assumed (*H.B.* II, 131) that the area was brought under Muslim sway at that time. The area was brought under Muslim jurisdiction much earlier.

<sup>2</sup> Thin kiln-burnt bricks with lime and mortar.

<sup>3</sup> Faqīr 'Irfān 'Alī, the caretaker of the mosque, personally narrated to me the history of the place when I last visited him in 1958. Other old people also corroborate it.

Indeed the name of the village seems to have been a corruption of the compound *ṣūbah-dihi* (the administrative or head-village) indicating most probably that it was the headquarters of a local unit of Muslim settlement.

Similar expansion of Muslim settlement and construction of mosques and tombs were in progress in other parts of the country as well. An inscription discovered at Sātḡāon (Hugli) and dated 861/1457 records the construction there, in the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd, of a mosque by his official Kamāl A'zam Tarbiyat Khān.<sup>1</sup> Another inscription, discovered at Ḥaḍrat Pandua records the construction of a tomb for an 'allāma (savant) who died on Monday, 28 Dhu al-Ḥijjah, 863/26 Oct., 1459, in the reign of "Sultān al-Salāṭīn Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd."<sup>2</sup> Though the 'allāma for whom the tomb was erected is not named, the way in which the memorial tablet is phrased shows that he was too well-known to need any mention by name. He is described as "the teacher of Imāms, the proof of the people, the sun of the nation, the testimony of Islam and the Muslims, the benefactor of the poor and the indigent, and the guide of the pious and of those who seek guidance."<sup>3</sup> A yet another inscription of the same ruler found at Dacca refers to the reconstruction and extension of a gate at the frontier of Mubārakabād, identified with the region to the east of the Brahmaputra, by Khān Khwāja Jahān on 20 Sha'bān, 863H. (13 June 1459). Interestingly enough, in this inscription Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn is described as *Khalīfa*, which title does not however appear in any other of his inscriptions or coins.<sup>4</sup>

Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd was a great builder. He laid the foundations of the citadel and palace at Gauḍ and beautified the city with other architectural monuments. Of these, a five-arched stone bridge, part of the massive walls of the fort and

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1873, pp. 270-271.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 271-272.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* The expression runs as follows:

استاذ الأئمة برهان الأمة شمس الملة حجة الاسلام والمسلمين نافع الفقراء والمساكين مرشد الواصلين  
والمسترشدين -

<sup>4</sup> J.A.S.B., 1872, pp. 107-108. The expression runs thus:

استحكم هذا الباب في أيام خلافة الخليفة المستعان أبو المظفر محمود شاه السلطان

See also J.A.S.B., 1910, New series, p. 145.

the city with other monuments. Of these, a

the *Kotwalī Darwāza* are still extant. The findspots of his inscriptions and the mint-towns mentioned on his coins show that during his reign there was no diminution of the territory of the Bengal Sultanat and that he effectively exercised his jurisdiction over the whole of Bengal excluding of course its extreme south-western region but including Sylhet and part of Bihar upto Bhagalpur. There is no reference to any military expedition undertaken by him, and the assumption, based on a very vague expression in an Oriya grant, that he might have suffered some military reverse at the hand of the Orissa king (Kapilendra Deva, 1436-70 A.C.) is purely conjectural.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest date found on the hitherto discovered coins of Maḥmūd is 846/1422<sup>2</sup> whereas the latest inscription belonging to his reign is dated 28 Dhu al-Hijja 863/1459. As this date is practically the end of that year and as the earliest inscription of his successor, Bārbak Shāh, is dated Ṣafar 865H., it has been reasonably assumed by scholars that Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd died in 864 H.

**(b) Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh, 864-878 H. (1459-1474)**

Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd was succeeded by his son Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak. Prior to his accession he served as governor of the Sātagāon region (Hugli), most probably as crown prince, under his father.<sup>3</sup> The earliest inscription of his reign has been discovered at Dinajpur.<sup>4</sup> It is dated 16 Ṣafar 865H. (1 Dec. 1460 A.C.) and it records the construction of a mosque by Ulugh Iqrār Khān, who is described as "wazīr and commander". It is further mentioned in the same inscription that the said Iqrār Khān also repaired the tomb of Ulugh Naṣrat Khān, who had been *Jangdār* and *Shiqdār* of the affairs of "Jor" and "Baror" and of other *maḥallas*. Baror has been identified by the discoverer of the inscription, Westmacott, as the "pargana of that name, now in Poorniah, outside the western border of Dinagepore".<sup>5</sup> Jor and the other *maḥallas* therefore must also have been in the neigh-

<sup>1</sup> R.D. Banerji, *History of Orissa*, Vol. I., pp. 289-90, 801-302.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> Tribeni Inscription, *J.A.S.B.*, 1870, p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1873, pp. 272-273.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

bouring areas. Thus this inscription, besides furnishing the earliest date of Bārbak Shāh's reign, shows that portions of north Bihar including the district of Purnia were within the Bengal Sultanat since at least the time of Nāsir al-Dīn Mahmūd, for the officer whose tomb was repaired at the beginning of Bārbak Shāh's reign must have administered that area prior to his accession.

The process of influx of Muslims from abroad and their settlement in Bengal continued during Bārbak's reign. A mosque inscription dated 870/1456 found at Mirzaganj in the district of Bākerganj (Barisal) shows that Muslim settlement in that area was in progress at that time, thus linking it up with Bagerhat region of the Khulna district which Khān Jahān had colonized in the previous reign. The most notable example of this process was, however, the arrival of Shāh Ismā'il Ghāzī, said to be a Quraishite Arab of Makka, with one hundred twenty of his associates. According to the *Risālat al-Shuhadā'*,<sup>1</sup> Shāh Ismā'il Ghāzī left Arabia with his followers for the sake of attaining the exalted "rank and honour of a martyr" in the cause of Islam and, after "leaving behind many dreary forests and deserts, they reached the frontiers of A'jam [Persia], from whence they passed to Hind, and at last after a long perilous journey arrived at Lakhnauti, the capital of Sultān Bārbak."<sup>2</sup> At that time the Sultān was busy in protecting the capital and its environs from the inundation of the "Chutia Putia"<sup>3</sup> river and Shāh Ismā'il earned his favour by successfully constructing a "bridge" (dam) over it, so much so that "elephants and horses could pass over it."

Shortly after this the south-western frontier of the Sultanat in the direction of Madāran (Hugli) was threatened by the rebellion of one "Gajapati, Rājā of Madāran". Madāran had long been

<sup>1</sup> It was compiled by Pīr Muhammad Shattari in 1633, during the reign of the Mughal emperor Shāh Jahān, and the manuscript was preserved for "several generations" in the family of the caretaker of Shāh Ismā'il Ghāzī's tomb at Kantaduar, Rangpur. The author states that he derived his information from "Shaikh Kabir, Shaikh Latif, Shaikh Mas'ūd and other keepers" of the tomb at Kantaduar and the nearby site of Jalā Maqām. In 1874 G.H. Damant, a British civil servant, obtained the manuscript from the then caretaker of the tomb at Kantaduar, who claimed himself to "be the descendant of one of the servants of Ismā'il, who came with him from Arabia." Damant had the text of the manuscript and an abstract English translation of it published in *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, pp. 215-239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> The vast marsh lying east of Gaud is still known as Chutia-Putia Marsh.

under the Muslim sway. As already mentioned, Bārbak himself was governor of that area (Sātgāon) during his father's reign. It appears therefore that his withdrawal from that place after his accession, presumably along with his best generals, encouraged the Orissa ruler (Kapilendra Deva, 1436—70) to try to advance in that direction, and "Gajapati" was in all likelihood an Orissan general. However, Sultān Bārbak entrusted the task of expelling the intruders to Shāh Ismā'il who proceeded there with his followers, "and a battle was fought in which, after a fight of a few hours, he [Gajapati] was completely defeated and taken prisoner and beheaded. After this success, Ismā'il gained still more favour and honour with the king."<sup>1</sup>

That Shāh Ismā'il gained "still more favour" is shown by his next assignment to ward off the Assamese intrusion in the north-eastern border areas of the Sultānat. Most probably taking advantage of the preoccupation of Sultān Bārbak Shāh with the Orissan pressure in the south-west, the Assamese had advanced from the north-east. The *Risāla* states that an army sent by the Sultān against "Kāmesar, king of Kāmṛūp, being repeatedly defeated, the command was at last given to Ismā'il." Assam was at that time being ruled by the Khens, a dynasty of Tibeto-Burman origin. None of the rulers of this dynasty is however known by the name Kāmesar. Most probably Kāmesar was the name of an Assamese general who, it appears, had advanced well inside the north-eastern region of the Muslim state as far as Santosh in Dinajpur district. Here a battle took place between Ismā'il's forces and those of Kāmesar, "on the field of Santosh within the borders of Islam", where Ismā'il suffered a defeat. He quickly reorganized his position, however, and erected a fortress at "Barapaika" in the neighbourhood and also another stronghold at "Jalā Maqām", a place surrounded by marshes and lying some three miles to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* This account of the *Risāla* is corroborated in all essential particulars by the popular legend which Blochmann found current in Hugli in 1870, (see *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1870, pp. 115-120). According to this legend Shāh Ismā'il is said to have led an expedition into Orissa with success, and then built a huge fort at Madāran; but then a jealous Brahman of the nearby area who had some influence with the Sultān poisoned the latter's mind by falsely representing that Shāh Ismā'il meant to set up an independent kingdom. Accordingly the Sultān, who is named in the legend as Husain Shāh (who in fact reigned some 30 years after Bārbak Shāh), summoned Shāh Ismā'il at court and executed him. The discrepancy with regard to the Sultān's name is obviously a confusion in popular memory.

west of Santosh. In course of the protracted confrontation, however, Kāmesar was impressed by the spiritual qualities of Shāh Ismā'il at whose hands he ultimately embraced Islam, agreed to pay tributes and withdrew from the Muslim territory. That the Kāmrūp forces withdrew from the place and that there was some understanding between Kāmesar and Ismā'il appear clearly not only from the latter's tomb there but also, in a way, by the account of his death as given by the *Risāla*. According to it, Ismā'il's death was brought about by the jealous machinations of "Bhandsi Rai, the Sultān's Hindu commander of Ghoraghat", a few miles south-west of Kantaduar, who sent "a false information to the king saying that Ismā'il had entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Rājā of Kāmrūp, and intended to set up an independent kingdom." Being thus instigated the Sultān sent an armed force against Ismā'il who ultimately submitted to them and was beheaded by the order of the Sultān on Friday, 14 Sha'bān 878 H. (4 January 1474). "Ismā'il's whole property was confiscated, and all his moveables were sent both from Madaran and the district of Ghoraghat to court."<sup>1</sup>

Though the Kāmrūp Rājā pressed on the north-eastern region, Sylhet continued to be under Bārbak Shāh's jurisdiction as proved by an inscription found at Hatkhola, Sylhet, dated 686 H. (1463 A.C.). On the Chittagong frontier, the Arakanese ruler also attempted to occupy that territory but he was successfully resisted, for the continuance of Chittagong under the Muslims is well attested by Rastī Khān's inscription at that place dated 878/1473. These military pressures in the east, north-east and south-west, and, presumably, an intention to keep the local nobles in check, led the Sultān to recruit a large number of Abyssinian slaves. According to Firishta, about eight thousand of them were employed in the army and in various key-posts in the state. It must not be supposed, however, that Bārbak Shāh was the first to introduce Abyssinians in the country. Prior to him, there were already many Abyssinians in the service of the Bengal Sultanat. As already noted, Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shah

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 220-221. It is noteworthy that the Hugli legend also attributes Ismā'il's death to the misrepresentation of a jealous Brahman (see previous note).

deputed his able and trustworthy Abyssinian servant Yāqūt to build the *madrasas* and distribute gifts in Makka and Madina. During Bārbak Shāh's reign, however, the Abyssinians were recruited in a large number. Subsequently these Abyssinians became a powerful factor in court politics and, as will be related presently, captured the throne for some time.

Sultān Bārbak Shah was a "just, liberal, learned and wise king".<sup>1</sup> A number of mosques were erected during his reign. Besides the inscriptions mentioned above, two other inscriptions, one found at Gaud and the other found at Deotala, some 22 miles from Malda towards Dinajpur, record the construction of mosques at those places.<sup>2</sup> The first inscription is dated 10 Jamādī I, 865 H. (24 Dec. 1460 A.C.), and the second is dated 5 Rajab 868 H. (4 March 1464 A.C.). From another inscription on the mosque at Deotala it is known that Deotala was in fact a town during Bārbak's reign having the name of Tiruābad.<sup>3</sup>

(c) Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Yūsuf Shāh  
(879—886/1475—1481)

Rukh al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh was succeeded by his son Yūsuf who assumed the title of Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Yūsuf Shāh. Most probably he was selected as crown prince by his father. An inscription found at Old Malda recording the construction of a mosque "during the time of" Sultān Yūsuf Shāh seems to be dated 870 H. "If the date is correct", observes Blochmann, "the inscription can only refer to Yūsuf as prince or governor; and this supposition is strengthened by the absence of the formula *khallada Allāhu mulkahu*, etc., which is due to the reigning king."<sup>4</sup>

The distinguishing feature of Yūsuf Shāh's reign was that he applied the laws of the *sharī'at* strictly and impartially in state affairs and charged the '*ulamā*' to see that the laws of Islam were carried out in all spheres of life. In fact under Yūsuf Shāh the Sultanat of Bengal became a truly Islamic state. In pursuance of

<sup>1</sup> Deotala Inscription, dated 5 Rajab, 868, *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, pp. 296-296. Also Tribeni Inscription of 860 H., *J.A.S.B.*, 1870, p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, pp. 295-297

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297. Most probably Tiruābad is a misreading of تبریز آباد (Tabrizābād) which appears in other inscriptions.

<sup>4</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, 298.

this policy the Sultān prohibited drinking of wine within his dominions. According to *Firishta*, "no one dared drink wine". This policy was also reflected in the construction of a large number of mosques in different parts of the country. An inscription found at Pandua (Hugli) in a ruined mosque to the west of Shāh Safī's tomb (*āstānā*) records that the mosque was built during the reign of Yūsuf Shāh by one "Majlis al-Majālis... Ulugh Majlis-i-A'zam", on 1 Muḥarram 882 (1477).<sup>1</sup> Obviously Ulugh Majlis-i-A'zam was an officer responsible for the construction of the mosque. An interesting feature of this inscription is that in it Sultān Yūsuf Shāh is called *Khalīfat-Allah* by "proof and evidence" ( *بالحجة والبرهان* ). Incidentally, this inscription also shows that the region (Hugli-Mandaran) which was cleared of the Orissa intruders by Shāh Ismā'īl Ghāzī during the previous reign continued to be within the jurisdiction of the Bengal Sultanat. Another inscription discovered at Hadrat Pandua (Gaud) and dated Friday, 20 Rajab 884 (1479) records the construction of another mosque at that place.<sup>2</sup> A yet another mosque was built at Gaud in the following year.<sup>3</sup> Another inscription of his reign has been discovered in one of the four mosques which surround the tomb of Shāh Jalāl at Sylhet. It refers to the construction of the mosque there, but as the inscription is built in the lintel of the mosque, it has not been possible to read its date. The name of the Sultān is, however, clearly visible.<sup>4</sup> This inscription is a further proof of the continuous hold of the Muslims over Sylhet. There are also other inscriptions of his reign recording the construction of mosques; but the most important of them seems to be the one found at *Darāsbārī* (College Compound) at Gaud which records the construction of a *Jāmī* mosque there in 884/1479 and which was most probably connected with a *madrasa* there.<sup>5</sup>

The inscriptions noted above indicate clearly that during Yūsuf Shāh's reign the Bengal Sultanat did not suffer any diminution of territory, and that the hostile manoeuvres of the Orissans in the south-west, the Assamese in the north-east and the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1873, 275-276.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>4</sup> *Memoirs*, 77.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.



Arakanese in the south-east, noticed during the previous reign, had either come to an end, or were suspended or abandoned in the face of repeated failures. On the whole Yūsuf Shāh's reign was a period of peace and prosperity. A number of his coins issued from the *Khazzāna* (Treasury), with no particular mint-name, have been discovered.<sup>1</sup> These reflect the economic stability and prosperity of the country under him. He died most probably in 886/1481, for the earliest coin of his successor Fath Shāh is dated 887/1482.

(d) Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Fath Shāh (son of Maḥmūd Shāh)  
886 – 892/1481 – 1487

On Yūsuf Shāh's death a prince named Sikandar Shāh was raised to the throne. According to the *Riyād* he was a son of Yūsuf Shāh. The prince was however devoid of "the necessary qualifications" to be a king, and was accordingly deposed after a nominal reign of a few days only. The throne was then offered by the nobles to Fath Shāh, son of Maḥmūd Shāh (grandfather of Yūsuf Shāh), who assumed the title of Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Fath Shāh.

An inscription dated 1 Dhu al-Qa'dah 886 (2 Jan. 1482) and a coin issued by Fath Shāh from the Fathabād (Faridpur) mint in the 'same year'<sup>2</sup> show clearly that he ascended the throne at the latest in that year. Like Yūsuf Shāh, he had also a peaceful reign of a little over seven years. At least five inscriptions, all recording the construction of mosques during his reign have come to light. The earliest of these inscriptions, as indicated above, is dated 886. It was found on an old mosque at Bandar, on the banks of a *khāl* (narrow stream) opposite Khizirput village in Dacca district. This mosque is stated to have been constructed by "al-Malik al-Mu'azzam" (the great Malik) Bābā Ṣāliḥ. The title indicates that he was a high official of the state, most probably a local governor, for such officials are found on inscriptions to have borne the title of "Malik". In any case Bābā Ṣāliḥ was undoubtedly a pious man who constructed at least two other mosques in the region after Fath Shāh's death. One of these mosques was built at 'Azīm-nagar

<sup>1</sup> Only on one of his coins a mint-name has been doubtfully read as Sunārgāon.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 282.

(Dacca district) in the year 901 or 910 H., the figures are not clear on the inscription.<sup>1</sup> Most probably the earlier date is correct; for Bābā Ṣāliḥ still describes himself as only "al-Malik al-Mu'azzam"; whereas in the inscription at Sunārgāon, where he constructed the other mosque in 911 H., he adds to his title: "the servant of the Prophet, who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medinah...".<sup>2</sup> The pilgrimage referred to in this latter inscription must have been made after the construction of the 'Azīmnagar mosque and must have taken a period of more than one year to perform. He appears to have died shortly after the completion of the Sunārgāon mosque. His tomb exists at Sunārgāon, and the inscription on it records that he died in Rabī' I of 912 H.<sup>3</sup>

Besides Ḥajī Bābā Ṣāliḥ's mosques, three other mosques were erected in Dacca district during Fath Shāh's reign. One of these was constructed at the instance of "Malik al-Mulk Akhund Shīr, the Admiral", on 10 Jamādī I 887/27 June 1482.<sup>4</sup> As the inscription was discovered in a private house at Pāthāntalā, one of the *maḥallāhs* (part of a large village) at Dhāmraī, some 20 miles north of Dacca city, it is difficult to say exactly where the mosque was built. The second, a *Jāmi'* mosque, was built at village Qādī Qasbah in Vikrampur. It was built by "al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Malik Kāfūr", most probably an Abyssinian officer, in the middle of Rajab 888/August 1483.<sup>5</sup> It is popularly known as "Masjid of Adam Shahid", a legendary *Shaikh* who is said to have come to that place to propagate Islam at a much earlier period. There is however no other evidence to substantiate the legend; and the inscription on the mosque clearly shows that it was built by Malik Kāfūr during the reign of Fath Shāh. When Dr. James Wise visited the mosque and discovered the inscription in 1873 the structure was "fast falling to pieces", three of its six domes having already collapsed. "The walls were ornamented with bricks", wrote Dr. Wise, "beautifully cut in the form of flowers and of intricate patterns. The arches of the domes spring from two sandstone

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 283.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1872, 109.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1873, 284, also 1889, 23. plate V.

pillars, 20 inches in diameter.... The pillars are eight-sided at the base, but about four feet from the ground they become sixteen-sided. The *mihrābs* are nicely ornamented with varied patterns of flowers, and in the centre of each is the representation of a chain supporting an oblong frame, in which a flower is cut."<sup>1</sup> The third mosque was built at Sunārgāon by one "Muqarrab al-Daulat Malik... al-Dīn", who was the "Keeper of the Wardrobe outside the Palace, the commander and *wazīr* of the territory of Mu'azzamabad, also known as Mahmūdabād, and commander of the *Thānā* Lawud", in the month of Muharram 889/1484.<sup>2</sup> Laud is a well-known place in Sylhet district, whereas Mu'azzamabad is coterminous with Dacca district.

The fifth inscription of Fath Shāh's reign refers to the construction of a "noble and great" mosque at Sāt-gāon, Hugli. It is dated 4 Muharram 892/1 January 1487. The mosque was constructed by Ulugh Majlis Nūr, "Commander and *wazīr* of the district of Sajla Mankhabad, and the town known as Simlabād, and also commander of Thānā Laobla and Mihrbak, district and *mahal* of Hādīgar".<sup>3</sup> The places mentioned here were situated in the districts surrounding Sāt-gāon. Laobla has been identified with Laopla in the Twenty-four Parganas district, ten miles due east from Tribenī (in Hugli),<sup>4</sup> whereas Hādīgar has been identified with Hāthigar in the same district. Similarly the district of Sajla Mankhabād has been identified with portions of Hugli and Burdwan districts, and Simlabād with Selimabād on the Damodar in the latter district.

The construction of these mosques, and the information the inscriptions supply about the officers and their respective areas of activities show that during Sultān Fath Shāh's reign the territory of the Sultanat remained in tact and that he had a peaceful and prosperous reign marked by the steady spread of Muslim settlements and Islam in the country. Other mosques also must have necessarily been built in other areas, but their records have been lost to us.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1873, 285.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 285-286.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1870, 293-294.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 294, n.

The last years of Fath Shāh's reign were clouded by the growing influence of the Abyssinians who had been recruited in large numbers during Bārbak Shāh's reign. Like the Turkish guards of the 'Abbāsīd Khalīfas, these Abyssinians occupied most of the important positions at court. They also manned the palace-guards of the Sultān. Fath Shāh appears to have grown tired of their power and highhandedness and to have taken some steps to curb their influence. This led to their hatching a conspiracy against him under the leadership of Shāhzādā, commander of the palace-guards. Their opportunity came when the loyal Abyssinian commander, Amīr al-Umarā' Malīk Andil was away from the capital on an expedition. Shāhzādā murdered Fath Shāh with the help of his fellow conspirators and then ascended the throne under the title of Sultān Bārbak Shāh (Shāhzādā). With the murder of Fath Shāh the rule of the illustrious Ilyās Shāhī dynasty came to an end. With the exception of Rājā Kāns's usurpation and the reigns of Jalāl al-Dīn and his son, this dynasty had ruled the Sultānat of Bengal for about a century and a half. It produced a remarkable succession of capable rulers whose reigns were marked by prosperity and popularity. The most notable development during the Ilyās Shāhī period was the spread of Muslim settlements and of Islam in Bengal. It may be confidently stated that if territorial expansion was the main feature of the previous period, growth and consolidation of the Muslim society was the distinguishing mark of the Ilyās Shāhī period. With the passing of the Ilyās Shāhīs, a very significant period of Muslim Bengal history came to an end.

#### II: THE ABYSSINIAN RULERS

Sultān Bārbak Shāh's rule was characterized by a policy of systematic elimination of his real or supposed opponents. He naturally gathered round him his own coterie, raising them to high offices, and removing the experienced officers loyal to the Ilyās Shāhīs. This did not, however, render Bārbak Shāh Shāhzādā's position completely secure. The loyal Abyssinian commander Malīk Andil succeeded in organizing a powerful opposition to the usurper, and one night when the latter was half-drunken

Malik Andil entered his room and killed him. It is stated that Malik Andil then offered the crown to Sultān Fath Shāh's infant son, but his mother (Fath Shāh's widow) declined the offer and expressed her wish that the avenger of her husband's murder should be the ruler. Accordingly the nobles raised Malik Andil to the throne. No coin or inscription of the time of the Abyssinian ruler Bārbak Shāh Shāhzāda has come to light. According to the *Riyāḍ* his highhanded and inglorious regime lasted for only six months.

(a) Saif al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Firūz Shāh (II)  
(Malik Andil)

On his accession to the throne Malik Andil assumed the title of Saif al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Firūz Shāh (II). He proved to be a just and efficient ruler. His hitherto discovered coins are dated between 892/1486 and 895/1489, which period agrees well with the statement of the *Riyāḍ* that his rule lasted for three years, though the exact years mentioned by the *Riyāḍ* (896—899 H.) are evidently mistaken, for, as will be seen presently, his successors Mahmūd Shāh and Muzaffar Shāh are definitely known to be on the throne in 896 H. In spite of the troubles over succession the Sultanat does not appear to have suffered any territorial loss during that period. One of Firūz Shāh's inscriptions has been found at Sherpur in northern Mymensingh district,<sup>1</sup> which shows that he exercised effective control over both the eastern and western regions of the Sultanat. Two other inscriptions belonging to his reign and recording the construction of mosques have been discovered—one from Old Malda town and the other from Goamalti in the same district. The date portion of the former inscription is illegible, while the latter is dated 15 Šafar 894 (18 January 1489).<sup>2</sup> Some of his coins were issued from the Faḥabād (Faridpur) mint.

Sultān Firūz Shāh II was noted for his benevolence and kindness to the poor and needy. The *Riyāḍ* records an anecdote which illustrates the extent of the Sultān's liberality. One day

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1874, 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 299-300.

Sultān Fīrūz Shāh II ordered a *lakh* of rupees (100,000) to be distributed to the poor. The ministers thought that the Sultān was being too generous and, in order to impress upon him the hugeness of the amount, piled the silver coins in an apartment on the way of the Sultān's exit from the court. When Fīrūz Shāh entered the room and saw the pile, he asked why was it put there; and on being told that it was the amount he had ordered to be distributed to the poor, he exclaimed: "Is this all? It is too little; add another *lakh*." The ministers were naturally astonished; but were obliged to carry out the Sultān's wish.<sup>1</sup>

Fīrūz Shāh II was also a patron of art and architecture. During his rather short reign a number of beautiful mosques were constructed. According to E. V. Westmacott, who discovered the above mentioned inscription from Goamalti, the ruins of the mosque indicated that it had "ten domes, in two rows, the length of the building being divided by the row of pillars."<sup>2</sup> The *Riyād* informs us that Fīrūz Shāh II built a mosque and a tower, and also constructed a water reservoir, at Gaud. Of these structures the tower, known as the *Fīrūz Minār*, is still in a fair state of preservation. Though the *Riyād* says that the reign of Fīrūz Shāh II came to an end by his murder at the hand of a palace-guard (*pāik*), it is more probable that he died a natural death in 895/1489. He was undoubtedly the best of the Abyssinian rulers.

(b) Nāsir al-Dīn Abū al-Mujāhid Maḥmūd Shāh II  
896/1490

The immediate successor of Fīrūz Shāh II was Maḥmūd Shāh II. Both the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* and the *Riyād* state that Maḥmūd was a son of Fīrūz Shāh II; but *Firishta*, quoting "the history of Ḥājī Muhammad Qandahārī" which is no longer available, states that Maḥmūd II was the son of Fath Shāh, that Fīrūz Shāh II had entrusted the prince to the charge of a eunuch named Ḥabshī Khān for bringing him up, and that after Fīrūz Shāh's death Maḥmūd II was placed on the throne.<sup>3</sup> This information is supposed by Blochmann to be correct on the grounds (a) that all the histories

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*. (tr. Delhi reprint, 1975), p.125.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, 299.

<sup>3</sup> *Firishta*, 584.

mention that Fath Shāh had left at his death a minor son of about two years whom Malik Andil (Firūz Shāh II) had offered the crown after having killed the usurper Shāhzāda (Bārbak Shāh) and (b) that according to Muslim practice, "children often receive the names of the grandfather". Hence, argues Blochmann, Fath Shāh would call his son Nāṣir al-Dīn Mahmud; "but as the *Kunyah* must be different, we have here 'Abul Mujāhid', while the grandfather has 'Abul Muzaffar.'" <sup>1</sup> This argument of Blochmann's cannot, however, be accepted; for assuming the above mentioned points to be correct, the supposed son of Fath Shāh would only be 5 years old at the end of Malik Andil Firūz Shāh II's rule and would therefore be still too young to assume royal responsibilities. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Mahmūd Shah II does not describe himself as "son of a king" (*ibn al-Sultān*), as is usual, on his coins or inscriptions.

Be that as it may, Mahmūd Shāh II had a very short reign. One of his inscriptions recording the construction of a mosque at Gaud describes him as "the help of Islam and the Muslims". <sup>2</sup> This seems to be a true reflection of his character and policy, for even during his short reign at least two other mosques were built, one of them being at Burdwan. <sup>3</sup> During Mahmūd Shāh's reign, however, Ḥabshī Khān grew in influence and this roused the jealousy of the other ambitious elements of his race. One of them, Sidi Badr, nicknamed *Dīwāna*, killed Ḥabshī Khān and then Mahmūd II, and ascended the throne in 896/1491.

**(c) Shams al-Dīn Muzaffar Shāh (Sidi Badr)**  
**896—898/1491—1493**

On accession to the throne Sidi Badr assumed the title of Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Naṣr Muzaffar Shāh. Coming to power as he did through a bloody coup, he naturally attempted to get rid of his real or supposed enemies, and all histories represent him to be

<sup>1</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 288.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 289, and plate VII, No. 3.

<sup>3</sup> It has been suggested (A.B.M. Haibibullah, in *H.B.*, II., 140) that the Kālnā inscription shows "the continuity of expansion in that direction at the expense, most obviously of Orissa". This is a confusing statement. Burdwan was one of the earliest territories brought under the Muslims. Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Bakhtiyār's lieutenant Muhammad Shiran was in charge of that territory (Lakhnor) which continued in general to be under the Muslims. Even under Fath Shāh, as noted above, Burdwan (Sajla Mankhabād and Simlabād) was within his jurisdiction.

a blood-thirsty ruler. This has however to be taken with some caution,<sup>1</sup> for the inscriptions of his reign rather reflect a different view. Particularly the one found at Hadrat Pandua (Gaud) recording the construction of a building near the tomb of Nūr Qutb al-'Ālam on 17 Ramaḍān 898 (2 July 1493) refers to him as a "just, liberal, learned king", and also describes him as "the help of Islam and Muslims".<sup>2</sup> This was at least the view entertained of him by the learned and pious men who attached themselves with the educational and cultural centre then under the superintendence of Shaikh Ghauth, a great-grandson of Shaikh Nūr Qutb al-'Ālam. Shaikh Ghauth is called in the inscription the "Shaikh of Islam, the Shaikh of Shaikhs, son of the Shaikh of Shaikhs."<sup>3</sup> That Muẓaffar Shāh was not altogether a heartless tyrant and that he devoted even his short reign to the promotion of education and culture is also evident from another inscription discovered from Damdamah (Gangarampur), near Dinajpur, which records the construction of a mosque at the abode of the renowned Shaikh Makhdūm Maulānā 'Atā' in 896/1491.<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, this inscription, together with a gold coin issued by him in the same year clearly indicate that he had been able to consolidate his position on the throne in the very first year of his succession.

Muẓaffar's coins and inscriptions extend over the years 896 and 898, which confirm the statement of the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* that his rule lasted for three years and five months. His last days were however troubled, mainly because, as it appears, of the machinations of Sayyid Ḥusian whom he had appointed his minister. This latter person was an Arab of noble birth, but was highly ambitious. Most probably he had some part in installing Muẓaffar on the throne. At any rate Sayyid Ḥusain adopted some measures like the reduction of the soldiers' pay and the collection of revenues at extortionate rates if only to bring his sovereign

<sup>1</sup> The statement that "His sword fell equally heavily on the Hindu nobility and princes suspected of opposition to his sovereignty" (*H.B.* II., 140) is obviously an exaggeration, for no Hindu prince is known to have lived at the court at that time, nor any Hindu nobility is known to have sided with his opponents.

<sup>2</sup> Hadrat Pandua inscription of Muẓaffar Shāh, *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 290-91, and Plate VI, No. 2. The Arabic expression is:

السلطان العادل الباذل الفاضل غوث الإسلام والمسلمين .

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Gangarampur inscription of Muẓaffar Shāh, *ibid.*, 290.



Muzaffar into disrepute and unpopularity and thereby to prepare the ground for his own ascendancy. These measures did indeed create among the principal nobles and military chiefs a vehement opposition. The shrewd minister then placed himself at the head of this group and led the revolt against the Sultān. The latter and his supporters were besieged within the fort of Gaud. The civil war continued for four months during which some twenty thousand men are stated to have been killed on both sides. This shows that Muzaffar was not in fact totally unpopular without any support and that the contest was almost evenly matched. At the end, however, Muzaffar was defeated and was either killed in battle or was done to death by a palace-guard at the instance of Sayyid Husain.<sup>1</sup> The latter then ascended the throne and started a new line of rulers known as the Husainī or Husain Shāhī dynasty.

<sup>1</sup> According to the *Riyād* (p. 129) and the *Firishta* (II., 30) Muzaffar was killed in battle; but the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* (III., 270) and the Portuguese writer Joa de Barros (quoted in *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 287) state that Muzaffar was secretly killed with the help of a palace-guard.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ARAB DYNASTY I: 'ALĀ' AL-DĪN ḤUSAIN SHĀH

(899-926/1494-1520)

The death of Muzaffar Shāh and the accession of 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh marked the beginning of a new dynasty of rulers. They are generally referred to as the Ḥusainī or Ḥusain Shāhī dynasty; but it is more appropriate to call them the Arab dynasty, because there is no doubt that they were Arabs in origin and they liked to emphasize this fact in their records. There were only four rulers in this dynasty, namely, (1) 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh, the founder of the dynasty (899—926 H), (2) his son and successor Nāṣir al-Dīn Nuṣrat Shāh (926—939 H.); (3) the latter's son and successor 'Alā' al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh (939 H.) and (4) Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh, a son of no. 1 (939—944 H.). The dynasty thus lasted only forty-six years. Yet the period is significant in a number of ways. The accession of Ḥusain Shāh, to begin with, brought to an end the period of strife and confusion which had generally characterized the years of the Abyssinian rule. The new ruler quickly restored peace and political stability which in turn paved the way for economic progress and territorial expansion. 'Ala' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh resumed the Ilyās Shāhī tradition of extending the Muslim sway towards the east, the west and the south-west with considerable success. Secondly, the establishment of this Arab dynasty in Bengal naturally highlighted the spiritual bond of the Bengal Muslims with the centre and birth-place of Islam. In consonance with their origin the new rulers were also enthusiastic patrons of Islam and Islamic learning which resulted in some progress of Islam in the land. Thirdly, the rulers of this dynasty particularly engaged themselves in benevolent activities and extended their patronage to the cultivation of vernacular as much as Arabic and Persian literature. They were also great builders and constructed some of the finest specimens in Muslim Bengal architecture. All these impart a significant cultural impress on the period of their rule as a whole. Last but not least, it was also during this period that the Hindu reaction to the spiritual and intellectual impact of Islam first manifested itself through the

rise of *Vaishnavism*.

With all these, however, the period was essentially a twilight of more far-reaching changes that were soon to come. Husain Shāh's accession in fact coincided with the rise of the Lūdī dynasty at Delhi and the break-up of the Jaunpur Sultanat under their pressure. Hitherto the Jaunpur Sultanat had served rather as a buffer state between the two Sultanats of Bengal and Delhi. The end of the Jaunpur Sultanat disturbed the balance of political power in north India and deprived the Bengal Sultanat of that detachment from the north-Indian involvement and direct relationship with the Delhi Sultanat which had in a large measure enabled the Ilyās Shāhīs to concentrate their entire time and energy on their own affairs. The new situation brought the Bengal Sultanat into direct contact with north Indian affairs and soon involved it in the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy which ensued shortly afterwards and which ended with the establishment of Mughal suzerainty first over northern India and ultimately over Bengal. The period also witnessed the intrusion of the Portuguese into the coastal region of Bengal with far-reaching political, economic and social consequences. In an overall view, therefore, the period of the Arab or Husainī rulers may be regarded as an epilogue of the Ilyās Shāhī rule as also a prologue to the establishment of the Mughal supremacy over Bengal.

#### I: ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE OF HUSAIN SHĀH

On a gold coin dated 899 H. (1494) which is the earliest of his coins and which most probably commemorates his accession, that year being the date of his accession also, Husain Shāh describes himself as a descendant of the Leader of the Prophets, i.e., Prophet Muḥammad (ولد سيد المرسلين ﷺ). The same claim is repeated also in the earliest of his inscriptions so far discovered, the Depara inscription dated Jamādī II 899 (March 1494).<sup>2</sup> The same information is recorded on a silver coin issued in the same year (899 H.)<sup>3</sup> and in another inscription dated 906 H. wherein

<sup>1</sup> Cat. II., No. 167, page 172.

<sup>2</sup> E.I., *Ar. & Per. Supplement*, 1965, 23-25, Pl. IXb. The expression in the inscription is in the plural, i.e., اولاد سيد المرسلين

<sup>3</sup> Cat. II., No. 193, p. 175.

the expression is clearly "related to the messenger of Allah" (المنسوب إلى حضرة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم).<sup>1</sup> Similarly Ḥusain Shāh records his father's name, Sayyid Ashraf al-Ḥusainī, on a number of coins and inscriptions.<sup>2</sup> Further, he describes himself as "the Sayyid of the Sayyids" (سيد السادات) and as *al-Ḥusainī* on a number of inscriptions.<sup>3</sup> Thus there is no doubt that Ḥusain Shāh was of Arab origin and that he was related to the Prophet's family, though perhaps very distantly. We have, however, no detailed or reliable information about his early life or about his activities in Bengal prior to his becoming the last Abyssinian ruler Muẓaffar Shāh's minister. Even the historians seem to record his name not quite correctly. Thus the *Ṭabqāt-i-Akbarī* merely calls him 'Alā' al-Dīn, which was obviously his *julūs* name. Firishta, on the other hand, calls him Sayyid Sharīf-i-Makkī,<sup>4</sup> and following him the author of the *Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn* writes his name as Sayyid Ḥusain Sharīf Makī, adding that Ḥusain's father, or one of his ancestors, might have been a *Sharīf* (ruler) of Makka.<sup>5</sup> This later inference is both conjectural and unlikely, as Blochmann points out, for "the Sharīf, or ruler, of Makkah, is called *Shairf-i-Makkah*, not *Sharīf-i-Makki*. The latter can only mean 'a man of the name of *Sharīf*, born in Makkah.'"<sup>6</sup> Both Firishta and the *Riyāḍ*, however, confirm in essence the epigraphic and numismatic evidence showing 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh's Arab origin.

Regarding his early life in Bengal we have two legends and two pieces of information supplied by the Portuguese sources and the *Riyāḍ*. One of the legends was set on foot by the late sixteenth century Bengali poet Krishnadās Kavirāj who, while dealing with the Vaishnava leader Chaitanya's life, stated, apparently with a

<sup>1</sup> The Ismailpur (Saran, Bihar) inscription of 906 (March, 1501), *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, 304 n.

<sup>2</sup> The father's name is recorded in at least 14 of his hitherto discovered inscriptions. See Dani, *Bibliography*, Nos. 76, 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 111, 114, 145, 146 and Narhan inscription of 909, *E.I.A.P.S.*, 1961, 41. For coins containing Ḥusain Shāh's father's name see for instance *Cat.* II., pp. 172-176. In fact, of the coins catalogued by Wright 25, one gold and 24 silver coins (Nos. 175-180, 182-192, 194-200) contain the father's name. Of these the gold coin (No. 168) and silver coins Nos. 189 and 190 record the father's name as Sayyid Ashraf Ḥusain, and the rest as Sayyid Ashraf al-Ḥusainī.

<sup>3</sup> See Dani, *Bibliography*, Nos. 75, 78, 83, 85, 105, 116, 119, 121. Of these inscriptions Nos. 83, 105, 116, 119 contain both the expressions of "Sayyid of the Sayyids" and *al-Ḥusainī*.

<sup>4</sup> *Firishta*, II., p. 585.

<sup>5</sup> *Riyāḍ*, pp. 128, 131.

<sup>6</sup> Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, No. 4, p. 334 n.

view to staining the memory of the Sultān, that the latter was early in his life employed under Subudhi Ray, then the lord of Gaud, who inflicted on him severe bodily punishment for some remissness in duty and that therefore Ḥusain Shāh, after becoming Sultān and at the instigation of his wife took revenge upon Subudhi Ray by desecrating his caste and thus obliging him to migrate to Benares. The story is so preposterous and tendentious that it should have been treated only as a piece of poetic imagination; yet ever since attention was drawn to it early in the twentieth century by a writer in order to illustrate what he called the "general attitude of the Mahomedans towards the Hindus of the day",<sup>1</sup> a number of other writers have taken this passage of the poet Krishnadās Kavirāj as of some evidence regarding Ḥusain Shāh's early life. It can only be pointed out here that there was never any ruler or lord of Gaud by the name of Subudhi Ray and that therefore the story is totally devoid of any historical basis. The second legend is recorded by Hamilton Buchanan on the basis of a Pandua manuscript saying in essence that Ḥusain Shāh's grandfather was Sultān Ibrāhīm who was deprived of his throne by court intrigues and that after some seventy years of that event Ḥusain Shāh recovered the throne etc.<sup>2</sup> The legend obviously confuses 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh of Bengal, as a recent writer points out,<sup>3</sup> with 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh of Jaunpur whose grandfather was Sultān Ibrāhīm Shāh Sharqī. Therefore this legend too is of no value for the early life of the Bengal Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh.

The Portuguese writer Joao de Barros, obviously referring to the political revolution resulting in Ḥusain Shāh's accession to the throne, states:<sup>4</sup>

"One hundred years before the Portuguese visited Chatgaon, a noble Arab arrived there from 'Aden, bringing with him 200 men. Seeing the state of the kingdom he began to form ambitious projects of conquest. Dissimulating his intentions, he set himself up as a commercial agent, and on this pretext added to his followers a reinforcement of 300 Arabs, thus

<sup>1</sup> J.N. Das Gupta, *Bengal in the Sixteenth Century*, Calcutta University, 1914, 38. The Bengali passage is fully quoted there.

<sup>2</sup> Martin, *Eastern India*, III, p. 448.

<sup>3</sup> M.R. Tarafdar, *Husain Shahi Bengal*, Dacca, 1965, Appendix B, pp. 357-358.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, No. 3, p. 287

raising his total force to 500 men. Having succeeded through the influence of the Mandarijs, who were the governors of the place, in procuring an introduction to the king of Bengal, he assisted that monarch in subduing the king of Orissa, his hereditary foe. For this service he was promoted to the command of the king's body-guard. Soon afterwards he killed the king, and himself ascended the throne. The capital was at this time at Gaur."

This account, as Blochmann very reasonably points out, refers to 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh's capture of the throne of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> It supplies us with a number of significant points which agree well with the circumstances of the time and also with the epigraphic and numismatic evidence that 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh was of Arab origin. The important points in the Portuguese account are: (a) that on his arrival in Bengal the "noble Arab" (i.e. Ḥusain Shāh) was encouraged to "form ambitious projects of conquests" by "seeing the state of the kingdom"; (b) that he therefore set himself up as a commercial agent and gathered round him a considerable number of fellow Arabs; and (c) that he became the commander of the king's body-guard by rendering him commendable services in a war against the Orissans. It is noteworthy that the later Ilyās Shāhīs, in the light of their experience of Rājā Kāns's usurpation of the throne, encouraged the immigration of foreign Muslims into Bengal, and in pursuance of this policy employed a good number of Abyssinians as palace-guards. A number of Arabs also came to Bengal at that time. 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh was obviously the leader of such an immigrant Arab group.

This Portuguese account also agrees substantially with the information of the *Riyād*. On the basis of an unspecified pamphlet the author of the *Riyād* states that Ḥusain Shāh and his brother Yūsuf, together with their father Sayyid Ashraf al-Ḥusainī, were living at Tirmidh in Turkistan before their arrival in Bengal. "By chance, they came to Bengal, and stayed in the *mouza* of Chāndpārā in the zilla of Rāḍha, and both the brothers took their lessons from the Qādī of that place. On knowing their noble pedigree, the Qādī married his daughter to Ḥusain Shāh. After this he entered the service of Muẓaffar Shāh."<sup>2</sup> The common

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Riyād*, p. 131.

elements in this and the Portuguese account are that both of them categorically speak about Husain Shāh's noble Arab origin, of his having come to Bengal sometime towards the end of the Abyssinian rule and of his entering the service of the last Abyssinian ruler Muẓaffar Shāh. While Joao de Barros states that Husain was introduced to the king by the "governors" of Chittagong, it might have been that in course of his ambitious project Husain Shāh also endeared himself with the Qādī of Chāndpārā whose daughter he is said to have married. Both accounts thus convey an impression of a systematic and planned way in which Husain Shāh indeed proceeded towards his goal.

Chāndpārā, where Husain Shāh is stated to have stayed for sometime and the Qādī of which place must have helped him in his advancement in life, has not been identified with certainty. On the basis of a later tradition regarding the origin of the *zamindārī* of Ekāni Chāndpārā in Murshidabad, and by way of lending support to poet Krishnadās Kavirāj's legend mentioned above, it has been suggested by some writers that Chāndpārā should be identified with Ekani Chāndpārā in Murshidabad district.<sup>1</sup> The arguments adduced in support of this identification are that the *Riyāḍ* speaks of Chāndpur being in zilla Rāḍha, which generally refers to west Bengal, and that a number of Husain Shāh's inscriptions have been discovered in Murshidabad district. This identification is not, however, convincing. Husain Shāh's inscriptions have been found in numbers in other places as well, and the term *Rāḍha* was at times used to indicate a wider area not excluding the former district of Jessore (including modern Khulna district). In view of this fact Blochmann's identification of the Chāndpārā in question with "Alāipur or 'Alāu-d-dīn's town" on the Bhairab, east of the modern town of Khulna appears more reasonable. He points out that Husain Shāh first obtained power in the adjacent district of Faridpur or Fathabād wherefrom his first coins were struck in 899 H.<sup>2</sup> Supporting this identification Abdus

<sup>1</sup> *H.B.*, II., pp. 142-143; and following it Tarafdar, *op. cit.*, 359. The latter states: "If the association of the sultan's early life with Murshidabad seems so much well-established, the fact of his serving" under the Hindu Subudhi Ray "before he became the ruler of Gaud, is also highly probable" (*ibid.*) It may be noted that Husain Shāh's early association with Murshidabad does not seem "so much well-established", nor is the story of Subudhi Ray at all credible.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, p. 228 n.

Salam, translator of the *Riyāḍ*, also adds that "Ḥusain Shāh's son, Naṣrat Shāh, erected a mint at the neighbouring place of Khalīfatabād (or Bagerhat, formerly in Jessore district) and minted there coins in the lifetime of his father in 922 A.H.", and that "the names of Ḥusain Shāh, his brother Yūsuf Shāh, and his sons Naṣrat Shāh and Mahmūd Shāh, are found in connection with several paraganas in Jessore (Jasar) district (as formerly constituted, before its being split up into Pabna, Khulna and Faridpur districts), such as parganas Nasratshāhī and Mahmūdshāhī and Yūsufshāhī, and Mahmūdabād (a whole Sirkar including Nothern Jessore or Jasar and Bhosnah)."<sup>1</sup> It may also be added that not far from 'Alāipūr is a village bearing the name of Sayyid Mahalla or "the residence of the Sayyids", in which the inhabitants are all Muslims bearing the family names of Sayyid or Qādī and claiming descent from the original settlers who were Sayyids and Qādīs. It is also noteworthy that the *Riyāḍ* calls Rāḍha as a district (zilla) in connection with Chāndpārā and not as a region, and there is a village a little farther from 'Alāipur, called Rāḍhali, which is in all likelihood reminiscent of the ancient name of Rāḍha. It is therefore more likely that Ḥusain Shāh and his Arab followers consisting of Sayyids and Qādīs at first settled and organized themselves at Alaipur-Sayyid Mahalla-Rāḍhali area of the modern Khulna district.

The next important stage in Ḥusain Shāh's life was his employment in the service of the king. The *Tārīkh-i-Firishṭa* and the *Riyāḍ* state that Ḥusain was appointed wazīr and "Administrator of the affairs of Government" under the last Abyssinian ruler Muẓaffar Shāh; while Joao de Barros writes that Ḥusain was appointed to the command of the king's body-guard. It might have been that he was initially appointed to the last mentioned post and was subsequently elevated to the position of wazīr and administrator etc. The statement of the *Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī* that he was a *sipāhī* or soldier under Muẓaffar Shāh most probably refers to the former's position as commander of the body-guard or to his services in connection with the Orissa campaign, as mentioned by de Barros. Surely Ḥusain could not have been an ordinary soldier

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ*, p. 129 n.



of Muzaffar Shah rising gradually to the rank of minister, for the latter's reign lasted for only two years and that was too short a period for an ordinary soldier to get to the rank of body-guard or of *wazir* by gradual promotion.

By all accounts Husain Shāh appears to be an ambitious person who planned his course of action well ahead in time. As minister of the last Abyssinian ruler he did all in his power to prepare his ground for a take-over. The last scene in the drama is thus drawn by the *Riyād*:

"...most of the principal noblemen, seceding from the king, went out of the city, whilst Sultān Muzaffar Shāh with five thousand Abyssinians and three thousand Afghāns and Bengalis entrenched himself in the fort of Gaur. For a period of four months, between the people inside, and outside, the city, fighting raged, and daily a large number of people were killed. ... At length Muzaffar Shāh, sallying out with his force from the city, gave battle to the nobles... Muzaffar Shāh, with a number of his associates and adherents, was killed on the field... And in the history of Nizamu-d-din Ahmad, it is related that when the people got disgusted with the misconduct of Muzaffar Shāh, Syed Sharif Maki becoming aware of this state of national disgust, won over to his side the Commandant of the House-hold troops and, one night, with thirteen men entering the inner chambers, slew Muzaffar Shah..."<sup>1</sup>

The *Riyād* further informs us that on the day Muzaffar Shāh was slain, "all the nobles held a council for the purpose of electing a king, and favoured the installation of Syed Sharif Maki" on the latter's undertaking to allot to them all the treasures to be found "over-ground in the city."<sup>2</sup>

The circumstances through which Husain Shāh came to the throne necessitated the adoption of some drastic measures in order to restore order and stability. He promptly ordered the victorious soldiery and unruly elements, who engaged themselves in pillaging the city of Gaud presumably in search partly of wealth and treasures and partly of their opponents, to desist from such acts. As they did not readily do so Husain Shāh ordered the execution, we are told, of "twelve thousand plunderers; then these stayed their hands from the work of pillage."<sup>3</sup> Secondly, Husain

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 127-128. The *Riyād* thus gives both the views regarding Muzaffar's end. It is therefore not quite correct to say, as for instance Tarafadar has done (*op. cit.*, 35-36) that the *Riyād* merely reproduces *Firishta* in this respect.

<sup>2</sup> *Riyād*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Shāh disbanded and dispersed the old palace-guards composed of the *pāiks* "whose faithlessness and regicides had become characteristic" and in their place he "appointed other body-guards".<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, he expelled the Abyssinians totally from the land. They at first tried to resettle themselves at Jaunpur but were ultimately obliged to go to the Deccan.<sup>2</sup> Fourthly, Ḥusain Shāh rehabilitated the nobles who had been maltreated or thrown out of their posts during the previous regime, and appointed them to suitable and responsible offices. He also sent efficient District Officers to different places, "so that peace in the country being secured, anarchy and revolutions which had occurred during the period of the Abyssinian kings etc., vanished, and all disloyal elements were reduced to order."<sup>3</sup> Finally, Ḥusain Shāh withdrew his capital from Gauḍ, doubtless because it had been much maligned by the civil war and the excesses of the victorious soldiery, to Ekdala, about 23 miles north of Pandua. The transfer of the capital might also have been suggested by the better defensive position of Ekdala in view of the break-up of the Jaunpur Sultānat and the threatening attitude of the Lūdīs of Delhi.

## II : EXTERNAL RELATIONS

### (a) Treaty with Sikandar Lūdī

The political changes in northern India engaged 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh's attention almost immediately after his accession. In the very year of his coming to the throne Sultān Sikandar Lūdī of Delhi completely defeated the Jaunpur Sultān Ḥusain Shāh Sharqī and occupied his territory. The Lūdī empire was thus extended to the western borders of the Bengal Sultānat. The defeated Jaunpur Sultān sought asylum in Bengal. 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh did not fail to grasp the implications of these developments. He received the fallen Jaunpur Sultān with due honour and provided for his residence at Kahlgaon (Colgong in Bhagalpur, Bihar). Sikandar Lūdī sharply reacted to this by sending an expedition towards Bengal under the command of Maḥmūd Khān and Mubārak Khān Lohānī. 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh was prepared for such an

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131-132.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

eventuality, and he sent his son Prince Dāniyāl with an army to intercept the Lūdī forces. The two armies remained encamped face to face for some time at Barh, Bihar. The Lūdī army did not commence hostilities because, we are told, there was a lack of supplies and scarcity of food in Bihar that year.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately negotiations were opened resulting in the signing of a non-aggression treaty. It "was settled that Sultān Sikandar should not trespass into Sultān 'Alā'-ud-dīn's kingdom, and in the same way the latter should not in any way interfere with Sultān Sikandar's dominions, and should not give shelter to his enemies. After the settlement, Maḥmud Khān and Mubārak Khān Lohānī returned..."<sup>2</sup> It appears that in sending the expedition towards Bengal Sultān Sikandar Lūdī's intention was not to attack it but to prevent a hostile combination of the fallen Jaunpur Sultān and the new Bengal Sultān for a counter-attack against the Lūdīs. This is further suggested by the fact that although the treaty provided for not giving shelter to Sikandar's enemies by the Bengal Sultān, the fugitive Jaunpur ruler continued to live under the latter's protection at Colgong. Presumably Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh saw to it that his guest led a peaceful life and did not engage himself in any hostile preparations against the Lūdī ruler. At any rate an immediate crisis was thus averted. And, fortunately, the continued stay of the Jaunpur ruler at Colgong did not prove to be an occasion for any conflict with the Lūdīs, though it appears that 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh was not unmindful of the possibility of utilizing the Jaunpur ruler against the Lūdīs if the need for so doing ever arose. This is perhaps indicated by the discovery of a number of post-regnal coins of the Jaunpur ruler dated between 901/1495 and 910/1504.<sup>3</sup> It has been suggested that these coins "were issued *benāmī* by Husain Shah of Bengal or one of his governors"<sup>4</sup>; or perhaps, the Bengal Sultān "allowed the crownless king to issue coins so that the latter might continue to retain

<sup>1</sup> Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab*, I., p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, I., p. 364.

<sup>3</sup> Lane-Poole, *The Coins of the Muhammadan states of India in the British Museum*, London, 1885, 107.

<sup>4</sup> Stapleton, *Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins, Eastern Bengal, Bengal and Assam*, Shillong, 1911, p. 108.

his claim to the Jaunpur kingdom."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Sikandar Lūdī is stated to have conferred the governorship of Tughlaqpur and Bihar upon two of his favourite nobles.<sup>2</sup> This also does not appear to have created any complications in Ḥusain Shāh's relation with Sikandar Lūdī who became too preoccupied with other matters to make good his claims over the eastern parts of the dismembered Jaunpur state. In any case, the whole of north Bihar and a considerable portion of south Bihar including Monghyr were well under Ḥusain Shāh's jurisdiction. This is shown by the Saran (north-western Bihar) inscription of 908/1502 and the Monghyr inscription of 903/1497-98. The former records the construction of a *jāmi'* mosque by Ḥusain Shāh himself,<sup>3</sup> and the latter records the construction of a vault by Prince Dāniyāl.<sup>4</sup>

#### (b) Recovery and expansion towards the north-east

The treaty with the Lūdī ruler was fortunate for Ḥusain Shāh in another respect; for he had in no time to turn his attention towards the north-east to beat back the Khen intruder in that quarter. It appears that taking advantage of the period of confusion following the Abyssinian usurpation, the Khen ruler of Kāmṛūp-Kāmtā, Nīlāmvara, had intruded into Bengal in the north-east and, while 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh was busy in dealing with the Lūdī threat, had advanced as far inside as the strategic military post of Ghoraghat on the Karatoya river. Kāmṛūp corresponds to the modern district of the same name in Assam lying between the rivers Barnadī and Manasā, two northern tributaries of the Brahmaputra; whereas Kāmtā lay to the west of Kāmṛūp, closer to Bengal, corresponding roughly to the modern Goalpara district in north-western Assam.<sup>5</sup> Ḥusain Shāh decided not only to oust the Khen intruder and recover the territories captured by him, but also to put an end to his aggressive designs by conquering his kingdom. Ḥusain's plans

<sup>1</sup> M.R. Tarafdar, *op. cit.*, 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, I, 304.

<sup>3</sup> *P.A.S.B.*, 1870, 297.

<sup>4</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 335.

<sup>5</sup> Mirza Nathan's statement (*B.G.* II., 806-7) that the territory of Kāmtā extended upto Ghoraghat obviously refers to the territorial expansion of the Khen ruler, for Ghoraghat in Rangpur is well within Bengal.

seem to have been facilitated by a division in the ranks of the Khen ruler's men. According to tradition the latter's Brāhman minister, whose son was killed by the Khen ruler, invited Husain Shāh to attack the Khen kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The expedition was undertaken with an overwhelming force and the Khens, after having withdrawn from the occupied territory, made their last stand within their fortified capital Kāmṭāpur which was besieged and captured after some resistance. Nīlāmvara, the Khen ruler, was taken prisoner to Gaud wherefrom he subsequently escaped. His territories of Kāmṛup-Kāmṭā were however annexed to the Bengal Sultānat. The whole operation was completed rather expeditiously within the very year of Husain Shāh's accession, 899/1494, for a coin issued by the Sultān in that year commemorates the event.<sup>2</sup> It was indeed a memorable achievement which is justifiably mentioned in a number of coins and inscriptions issued at different dates during Husain Shāh's reign.<sup>3</sup>

The annexation of Kāmṛup-Kāmṭā was followed by an expedition into Assam proper. "With an overwhelming army consisting of infantry and a numerous fleet", writes the *Riyād*, Husain Shāh marched into the kingdom of Assam." The Rājā of Assam not being able to oppose him, relinquished his country and fled to the mountains. The King [Husain Shāh], leaving his son

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton Buchanan, in *Eastern India*, II, 68-82, III, 425-26.

<sup>2</sup> See Tarafdar, *op. cit.*, 45-49; also his "The dates of Husain Shāh's expeditions against Kamrupa and Orissa", *J.N.S.I.*, XIX, 1957, Pt. I., 54-58. Hitherto it was believed that the expedition took place sometime between 903/1497 and 907/1502, on the grounds that the *Riyād* mentions Husain Shāh's son being left there to consolidate the conquest; whereas the *Assam Burunji* also mentions that Husain Shāh's son "Dulāl Ghāzī" was in charge of the campaign. Collating these two facts and arguing that Dulāl is scarcely a Muslim name, Blochmann held that the latter must be Prince Dānyāl mentioned in the Monghyr inscription of 903/1497 (*J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 335). And as prince Dānyāl remained in Bihar at least till that year, and as the earliest epigraphic reference to the conquest of Kāmṛup-Kāmṭā occurs in the Malda inscription of 907/1502, the campaign must have taken place between these two dates. The numismatic evidence, as shown by Tarafdar, proves beyond doubt that the campaign took place much earlier, in the first year of Husain Shāh's accession. It may also be added that it is not really necessary to connect prince Dānyāl with the conquest; any of Husain Shāh's many (18) sons might have been in charge of the campaign; that the identification of Dulāl Ghāzī with prince Dānyāl is purely conjectural based on seeming semantic similarity; and that, above all, Husain Shāh's Assam expedition was in fact a subsequent event distinct from the conquest of Kāmṛup-Kāmṭā.

<sup>3</sup> For coins mentioning the event see *Cat. II.*, 173-174, Nos. 175-180; N.K. Bhattacharya, *Hakim Habibur Rahman Collection*, 24, No. 120; Botham, *Catalogue etc.*, 169-171 and Lane-Poole, *Catalogue etc.*, 6, No. 122. Of the inscriptions making mention of the event the Malda inscription of 907/1502 (*J.A.S.B.*, 1874, 303), the Sylhet inscription of 918/1512 (*ibid.*, 1922, 413) and the Kantaduar inscription, date broken, (*E.I.M.*, 1933-34, 5) are important.

with a large army to complete the settlement of the conquered country, returned triumphant and victorious to Bengal. After the withdrawal of the King, his son devoted himself to the pacification and defences of the conquered country. But when the rainy season set in, owing to floods, the roads and tracks became closed; and the Rājāh with his adherents issued from the hills, surrounded the Royal army, engaged in warfare, cut off supplies of provisions, and in a short time put all to the sword."<sup>1</sup> Thus the expedition, though initially successful, ended in disaster mainly because of the peculiar geo-strategic situation of the land and the Muslim generals' ignorance of the difficulties that beset the terrain in the rainy season. This account of the *Riyād*, as its translator points out,<sup>2</sup> has for its support the *Ālamgīrnāmah* as well as the *Āssām Burunji*. According to the latter source the Muslim army was commanded by "Mit Malik" and "Baḍa Wazir" (the great minister) who proceeded along the course of the Brahmaputra and when they arrived at the banks of the Burai river they were resisted by the Assam Rājā who, being defeated, retreated. After strengthening his position, however, he faced the Muslim army once again and after alternating successes ultimately defeated them at "Singri" where "Mit Malik" with a large number of his soldiers were killed, but "Baḍa Wazir" managed to escape.<sup>3</sup> The *Burunji* thus mentions "Mit Malik" and the "Baḍa Wazir" as commanders of the Muslim army. The accounts of the Persian chronicles and Ḥusain Shāh's inscriptions leave no room for doubt that the expedition was led by the Sultān himself. Probably the *Burunji*'s statement refers to the state of the army after Ḥusain Shāh's return leaving his son and others to consolidate the conquest. "Mit Malik" and "Baḍa Wazir" presumably acted either jointly or in subordination to the prince. The "Baḍa Wazir", who is stated to have escaped the disaster, might be identified with the "Great Khān Rukn Khān 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Sarhatī", mentioned in the Deokot inscription of 918/1512 as the "Wazīr of the well-known city of Muẓaffarbād, the Commander of the army" etc.,<sup>4</sup> and in

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 132-133.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 132 n 1; see also *A.N.*, 703-731.

<sup>3</sup> *The Ahom Burunji*, ed. and tr. G.C. Barua, 61, 66-67.

<sup>4</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 106; *E.I.M.*, 1929-30, 12-13.

the Sylhet inscription of the same year as "Rukn Khān, the conqueror of Hasht Gamhariyan, who being Wazīr and Commander for many months at the time of the conquest of Kāmrū, Kāmtā, Jāznagar and Urisha, served in the army in several places in the train of the King."<sup>1</sup> This inscription, taken with the *Burunji*, indicate that the Muslim army in Assam was not completely destroyed and that, although defeated, a portion of them managed to escape with the *Baḍa Wazīr* (Rukn Khān). At any rate, the disaster of the Assam expedition did not affect Husain Shāh's hold over Kāmrūp-Kāmtā. The two territories continued to be under the jurisdiction of the Bengal Sultanat throughout the Husainī period so much so that when, in the second half of the sixteenth century the Koch rulers established their authority over Kāmrūp they found it necessary to issue coins in imitation of those of Husain Shāh and his successors in order to get the people used to the new regime.<sup>2</sup>

(c) War in the south-west:

Conquest of Jāznagar and part of Orissa

The Sylhet inscription of 918/1512 mentioned above shows that the Commander Rukn Khān 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Srahatī had accompanied the Sultān in his Orissa campaign also. Exactly when this expedition was undertaken is not known. The relation of the Bengal Sultanat with Orissa had never been very friendly; and it appears that hostilities in the south-west were started before the Assam expedition. The *Riyād* writes: "And subjugating the Rājās of the environs and conquering up to Orissa, he levied tribute. After this he planned to conquer Assam."<sup>3</sup> This information is also confirmed by a number of Husain Shāh's coins dated variously between 899/1494 and 924/1518 in which the conquest of Jāznagar and Orissa is mentioned along with the conquest of Kāmrūp-Kāmtā.<sup>4</sup> Jāznagar was a principality on the river Vaita-

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1922, 413. The translation quoted above is Stapleton's. Dr. Dani writes "who being wazir and commander of the towns" in place of "Wazir and Commander for many months" (*Bibliography*, 58).

<sup>2</sup> Stapleton, "Contribution to the History and Ethnology of North-Eastern India-I," J.A.S.B., 1910, No.4, 158.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād*, 132.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, pp.193-194.

ranī in south-west Bengal which the Orissa rulers used to maintain as a buffer state under puppet rulers. The conquest up to Orissa spoken of by the *Riyāḍ*, collated with the numismatic evidence, may be taken to refer to Jāznagar. And as the coins as well as the Sylhet inscription distinctly mention "Jāznagar and Orissa" it may be assumed that Ḥusain Shāh succeeded in capturing some parts of Orissa proper also. This assumption finds support in the manuscript history found at Pandua by Hamilton Buchanan<sup>1</sup> and also in the Orissa sources. The chronicle of the Jagannāth temple at Pūrī known as the *Madhya Panjikā* mentions that in 1509 Sultān Ḥusain Shāh's forces, taking advantage of the Orissa King Pratāprudradeva's absence from the capital, advanced as far as Pūrī, but that on the latter's return to the capital the Muslim forces withdrew to their frontier fortress of Mandāran (south-western Bīrbhum). Pratāprudra invested the Mandāran fort but had to abandon the siege on account of the treachery of one of his own officials named Govinda Vidyādhara.<sup>2</sup> Apologetic though the *Panjikā* is, it is evident from its account that the Muslim forces advanced well inside Orissa and that Pratāprudradeva could not achieve much in his counter-campaign to dislodge the Muslims from their frontier base of operations, Mandāran. The withdrawal of the Muslims to Mandāran, however, seems to have provided an occasion for Pratāprudradeva to proclaim, as he does in the Kāvālī Plate inscription of 1510 (1432 Śaka), the recovery of his lost territories from the Muslims and to assume the eulogistic title of "Lord of the Five Gaudas".<sup>3</sup> This inscription, it may be emphasized, is dated exactly one year after the Muslims' advance into Orissa. Even taking this record at its face-value, it is an indirect admission on the part of the Orissa ruler that he had previously lost parts of his territories to the Muslims. The recovery of the territories so ceremonially proclaimed in the inscription was either partial or temporary; for Ḥusain Shāh continued to issue coins after that date (1510 A.C.) recording his conquests of "Jāznagar and Orissa". Of these coins the most notable example is a gold coin, issued in 919 (1513), which is

<sup>1</sup> *Eastern India*, II, 619.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *J.A.S.B.*, 1900, Part I., No. 2, 186; also in *H.B.*, II., 148.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in R.D. Banerji, *History of Orissa.*, Vol. I., Calcutta, 1930, 328.



clearly a special and commemorative issue.<sup>1</sup> Had the Orissa king succeeded in recovering *all* his lost territories, or in keeping his continued hold over those recovered, Husain Shāh could not have issued this special gold coin and also other coins after that date making what would otherwise amount to a palpable misstatement of facts on so widely circulating and authentic public records as coins. Obviously what the Orissa king is stated to have recovered in 1510 was subsequently recaptured by Husain Shāh. Most probably he issued the special gold coin in 1513 to commemorate that notable achievement. It may be recalled here that the Sylhet inscription in which Rukn Khān takes pride in having accompanied the Sultān in his Jāznagar and Orissa campaigns is also dated two years later (918/1512) than the Kāvāli Plate inscription of the Orissa ruler. Significantly enough, no epigraphic, literary or numismatic source refers to any success for Pratāprudra after the year 1510.<sup>2</sup> Indeed on a comparative analysis of the records of the two rulers it may be stated that early in his reign Husain Shāh conquered Jāznagar and parts of Orissa, that after that the Orissa king made attempts to recover his lost territories, and that though at times succesful in making some headway, he could not recover *all* the lost territories and was even dislodged from whatever ground he had regained. For one thing, both the Muslim and Orissa sources show that the conflicts were protracted over a period of years. This is also indicated by the Vaishnava literature which, while referring to the Hindu reformer Chaitanya's journey from Bengal to Orissa and return mentions about the state of war between the two countries. The peak of this protracted conflict was reached between the years 1509 and 1513. Thereafter, though a state of war with perhaps occasional armed clashes subsisted between the two countries, Husain Shāh evidently continued to hold his conquests and issue coins proclaiming so till at least 1518.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, 47, Pl. VI, No. 122.

<sup>2</sup> There are two other references to Pratāprudra's success, one an inscription, and the other an allusion in the writing of a contemporary poet. The inscription is dated 1500 (1422 Śaka), and the poet specifically refers to the early years of Pratāprudra's reign.

<sup>3</sup> The view expressed in *H. B.*, II, 148, that "Beyond a possible recovery of Mandāran" Husain Shāh's Orissa campaign "could not have produced any tangible result" appears to be a gross understatement of fact in disregard of the unequivocal and positive evidence of coins and inscriptions.

## (d) Conquest of a part of Tripurā

Ḥusain Shāh's preoccupations with the Assam and Orissa campaigns seem to have encouraged the Tripura ruler Dhanya Mānikya to aggrandize himself by making incursions into the eastern border-lands of the Bengal Sultānat. Tripurā or Tippera roughly corresponded with the modern Indian state of the same name lying to the east of the Comilla district of Bangladesh. The Tippera chronicle named *Rājmalā* informs us that Dhanya Mānikya commenced hostilities by capturing a number of border outposts and by appointing a governor over them. The people of the places were however loyal to Ḥusain Shāh. They captured the Tippera governor and sent him a captive to Gaud. At this Dhanya Mānikya appointed a tyrant as governor in the person of Rāy Kachchaga who succeeded in establishing his hold over the occupied lands only after having treacherously killed twelve local chiefs who were loyal to the Sultān.<sup>1</sup> The *Rājmalā* further informs us that an expedition sent by the Sultān was also repulsed with heavy losses. All this, however, must have happened before 919/1513, for by that year not only the Tippera forces were expelled, but also certain parts of Tippera were definitely captured by Ḥusain Shāh's forces. This is evident from the Sunārgāon inscription of 2 Rabī' II 919 (7 June 1513) which mentions Khwās Khān as the "military governor of the land of Tipurah and Wazīr of the province of Mu'azzamābād" (سر لشکر زمین تپوره و وزیر اقلیم معظما باد).<sup>2</sup> Previously to Khwās Khān's appointment in those parts, Khālīs Khān was the "Commander and Wazīr" of the province of Mu'azzamābād only.<sup>3</sup> The addition of the "land of" Tippera to the administrative jurisdiction of Mu'azzamābād and the appointment of Khwās Khān as *Sar-i-Lashkar* (military governor) of the former in addition to his duties as *wazīr* (governor) of Mu'azzamābād, clearly indicate that the land of Tippera was a recent acquisition through military operations.

It was most probably to relieve this pressure upon his territories and to create a diversion for the Bengal Sultān that

<sup>1</sup> Vangiya Sāhitya Parisad MSS No. 2259, of the *Rājmalā*, quoted in Tarafdar, *Ḥusain Shāhī Bengal*, Dacca, 1965, 51.

<sup>2</sup> *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 333-334.

<sup>3</sup> Sylhet inscription, dated 911/1505, *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 293-294.

Dhanya Mānikya launched an attack upon Chittagong, the extreme south-eastern possession of the Sultanat, and captured it, according to the *Rājamālā*, in 1513 (1435 Śaka).<sup>1</sup> In this move of his Dhanya Mānikya was probably encouraged or supported by the ruler of Arakan from whom Chittagong had been recaptured by the Ilyās Shāhī Sultān Bārbak Shāh. Husain Shāh responded to this move by sending an expedition against Tippera under the command of one Gaud Mallik. The latter inflicted a defeat upon the Tippera forces under Rāy Kachchaga, occupied the inland fortress of Mihirkul, and made an advance towards the Tippera capital Rangāmāti by following the course of the Gumti river. While, however, the Muslim forces were crossing the dry bed of the river well inside the Tippera kingdom, Rāy Kachchaga released a dam upstream as a result of which Gaud Mallik and a large number of his forces were drowned to death. Another expedition sent by the Sultān under Hatian Khān to make a march upon the Tippera capital met with a similar fate though Hatian Khān escaped only to be punished by the Sultān.<sup>2</sup> It is clear from this account of the *Rājamālā*, however, that the Tippera ruler was now fighting a defensive war and that though the two successive expeditions sent by Husain Shāh failed to reach the Tippera capital, the pressure was enough for its ruler to withdraw his forces from the Chittagong frontier. This is indicated by another statement of the *Rājamālā* that Chittagong was occupied by the Tippera forces in 1515-1516 (Śaka 1437). Evidently this was a second occupation after its abandonment to ward off Hatian Khān's expedition. This second occupation was accompanied or preceded by the advance of the Arakanese also on the place.

Dhanya Mānikya's plans for recovering his lost territories by creating a pressure on the Chittagong front did not, however, succeed. After the failure of Hatian Khān's expedition Husain Shāh sent a fourth expedition against Tippera, most probably under the command of the Crown Prince Nuṣrat Shāh.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Rājamālā*, quoted in *H.B.* II., 149; R.D. Banerji, *Vāṅlār Itihāsa*, II., Calcutta, 1324 B.E., 252-252; Tarafdar, *op. cit.*, 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> This seems to be the case in view of the recovery of Chittagong shortly afterwards by Nuṣrat Shāh, as will be related presently.

*Rājamālā* does not give any detail about this expedition, nor does it mention the result of the war which was fought near Kailārgar fort shortly afterwards, in which Dhanya Mānikya himself took part. Fortunately the contemporary Bengali literature and the Portuguese accounts, supplemented by a mid-nineteenth century Persian history of Chittagong compiled on the basis of traditions current there, throw sufficient light on the subsequent developments in the conflict. According to the last mentioned source, Nuṣrat Shāh, who was a "King or prince of Bengal", conquered the territory of Chittagong and made it a *Dār-al-Islām*. He went "with a large number of Musalman and Hindu emigrants, to Eastern Bengal, and attacked the Mugs,<sup>1</sup> took their town, and made it a domicile for his men." It is further stated that one Alfa Ḥusainī, a great Arab merchant "who possessed much wealth and many slaves and owned fourteen ships", assisted Nuṣrat Shāh "with ships and material, and thus raised the standard of victory (nuṣrat) in that country. Ḥusainī, for this reason, became the King's son-in-law, and lived honoured and distinguished." The author further informs us that after this victory Nuṣrat Shāh renamed the place as "Fathabād" (abode of victory).<sup>2</sup> From this account it appears that Nuṣrat Shāh, after having defeated Dhanya Mānikya in the battle of Kailārgarh proceeded towards Chittagong to expel the Maghs (Arakanese) from there, which he succeeded in doing with the assistance of the great Arab merchant Alfa Ḥusainī. That Chittagong was recovered before the year 1615 was out, (that is within the same year of its second occupation by the Tippera and Arakanese forces in 1473 Śaka/1515-16) is attested by the Portuguese authorities. Joa de Silveria, who landed at Chittagong in 1517, found it under the possession of the "King of Bāngālā".<sup>3</sup> At that time, informs De Barros, the King of Arakan was a vassal of Bengal.<sup>4</sup> Another Portuguese writer, Martim Jusarte, mentions a great and influential merchant named Alfa Khān in whom he found a good friend.<sup>5</sup> This Alfa

<sup>1</sup> The Arakanese were referred to as the Mugs or Maghs till recently.

<sup>2</sup> Maulavi Hamidullah Khan Bahadur, *Aḥādith al-Khāwānīn (Tārīkh-i-Ḥamīdī)*, Calcutta, 1871, 17-18, tr. and quoted by Blochmann, *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 336-337.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, Calcutta and London, 1919, 28 n.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Khān has been rightly thought to be the same person as the Alfa Ḥusainī of the Persian history of Chittagong.<sup>1</sup> The latter's account is thus corroborated in its essential features by the Portuguese sources. Now, collating the evidences gathered from the *Rājamāla*, the Sunārgāon inscription of Ḥusain Shāh (dated 919/1513), the Portuguese sources and the mid-nineteenth century Persian history of Chittagong (*Aḥādīth-al-Khawānīn*) we may fix the chronology of the conflict as follows :

- 1509 (?) — Pūrī expedition of Ḥusain Shāh—Dhanya Mānikya captured several outposts within the jurisdiction of the Bengal Sultanat.
- 1510 — Ḥusain Shāh's first expedition against Tippera repulsed.
- 1511-12 — Tippera forces expelled from the occupied places.
- 1513 — Parts of Tippera already brought under the administrative control of the Mu'azzamabād (Dacca) governor (Sunārgāon inscription).
- 1513-14 — Chittagong attacked and captured by Dhanya Mānikya.
- 1514-15 — (a) Gaud Mallik's expedition — initial success, ends in disaster.  
(b) Hatian Khān's expedition, also unsuccessful; but  
(c) Tippera forces withdrawn from Chittagong to meet the above mentioned attacks; and  
(d) Advance of the Arakanese on Chittagong.
- 1515-16 — (a) Re-entry of Tippera forces into Chittagong.  
(b) Nusrat Shāh's expedition — battle of Kailāgarh.  
(c) Nusrat Shāh recovered Chittagong by expelling the Arakanese, and probably, also, the remnant of the Tippera forces.
- 1517 — The portuguese arrived and found Chittagong under the government of the Bengal Sultanat.

The sequel is glimpsed from the contemporary Bengali literature. Kavindra Parameswara, a poet who translated a part of the *Mahābhārata* under the patronage of Parāgal Khān informs us that the latter was appointed governor of Chittagong by Ḥusain Shāh.<sup>2</sup> Parāgal Khān continued the military pressure against Tippera and, according to the poet, it had to surrender to the Sultān of Gaud.<sup>3</sup> Parāgal Khān had a military outpost, or perhaps his headquarters, near the Sitakund hill, some thirty miles north

<sup>1</sup> Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 298, n.

<sup>2</sup> Sukumar Sen, *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, I., Calcutta, 1941, 225; D.C. Sen, *Vaṅga Bhāṣā O Sāhitya*, Calcutta, 1356 B.E., 94, quoting the *Parāgalī Mahābhārata*.

<sup>3</sup> Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, 225 n.

of modern Chittagong town, where the now insignificant village called Parāgalpur still bears the memory of the brisk military activities of the governor. Parāgal Khān's son and successor in the governorship of the Chittagong region, Chhutī Khān, pushed the Arakanese further south and also continually pressed on the Tippera ruler. Poet Śrīkara Nandī, who flourished during Chhutī Khān's time and received his patronage, states that the Tippera ruler lived in a state of terror for Chhutī Khān and retired to the hills in the face of the Muslims' advance against him. The Tippera ruler had ultimately to procure peace by making his submission to Chhutī Khān and by offering him a number of horses and elephants as tribute.<sup>1</sup> Thus was the Tippera ruler brought to his knees. He had not only to disgorge the border outposts which he had initially occupied but also to cede a considerable portion of his territories in the north-west, which were placed under the administrative charge of the Sunārgāon (Mu'azzāmābad) governor, and also probably some territories in the south-west which were included in the jurisdiction of the Chittagong governor.

Three things emerge clearly from a review of Ḥusain Shāh's military operations. First, he had to wage wars almost simultaneously on all fronts-north-east, east-south-east and south-west. He fought single-handed against all his enemies and he gained the upper hand over all of them. Though his Assam expedition was a failure, it did not affect his territorial acquisitions of Kāmṛūp-Kāmtā and resulted only in checking the further extension of his territories towards the east. Secondly, his wars with Kāmṛūp-Kāmtā and Tippera, and possibly also with Orissa, were essentially defensive in origin. His north-eastern campaigns, culminating in the Assam expedition, were forced upon him by the occupation of a part of the north-eastern territories of the Bengal Sultanat by the Khen ruler during the pervious period of trouble. Similarly the campaigns against Tippera were also necessitated by the aggressive designs of the latter's ruler who initiated hostilities by capturing a number of outposts in Ḥusain Shāh's dominions. The origin of the Orissa war is not on record; but circumstantial evidence suggests that it

<sup>1</sup> Śrīkara Nandī, *Aśvamedha Parva*, 3-4.

was also forced upon the Sultān. All the extant sources of information show that hostilities with Orissa broke out quite early in his reign, almost simultaneously with or perhaps prior to his Kāmrūp-Kāmtā expedition. It is noteworthy that unless there was some compelling reason for him to do so, it is highly unlikely that Husain Shāh should have commenced hostilities with two powerful adversaries on two opposite fronts at the same time, or that he should have indulged in purely conquering adventures before liberating his territories captured by the Khen ruler in the north-east, and that also before he had hardly consolidated his position after the bloody civil war preceding his accession. Rather, considering the traditionally hostile attitude of the Orissa ruler toward the Bengal Sultānat, and the *Riyād*'s statement that Husain Shāh turned his attention towards Assam after "subduing the Rājās of the environs and conquering up to Orissa", it may be reasonably supposed that like the Khen ruler the Orissa ruler also had intruded in the south-western region during the Abyssinian regime setting up vassal chiefs in the occupied border lands. Husain Shāh thus perhaps found it necessary to put an end to this intrusion and to strengthen his defensive position in that region by "subduing the Rājās of the environs" and pushing his frontier "up to Orissa" so that its ruler might not create trouble in the rear during his (Husain Shāh's) absence from the capital on the Kāmrūp-Kāmtā expedition. At any rate it is known even from a Hindu source that the general people of Jājapura (Jāznagar) welcomed the Muslims as deliverers from Brahmanical oppression.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, Husain Shāh's wars continued almost intermittently throughout his reign from the year of his accession till at least 1516 A.C., the year in which Chittagong was recaptured, and probably even after that date by Parāgal Khān. This fact alone speaks for his great financial and military resources. These long wars could not have been waged without effective internal political stability and active cooperation of the people in general. If Gauḍ Mallik is taken to be a Hindu, one of Husain Shāh's important expeditions against Tippera was led by a Hindu commander. Several officers on the Orissa frontier as

<sup>1</sup> *Sūnya Purāna*, quoted in Sukumar Sen, *Vāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa*, Calcutta, 1948, 495-96.

mentioned in the Vaishanva literature were also Hindus. A considerable portion of the army serving on the various frontiers must also have been local recruits.<sup>1</sup>

### III: THE TERRITORIAL LIMITS OF HUSAIN SHĀHĪ BENGAL

As a result of these wars Husain Shāh succeeded not only in recovering the territories lost during the Abyssinian rule but also in considerably extending his frontiers in all directions. Towards the close of his rule the jurisdiction of the Bengal Sultanat extended over the whole of Bengal as it was constituted just prior to the British withdrawal in 1947, excepting the district of Darjeeling and part of the district of Jalpaiguri in the north, Chittagong Hill Tracts and part of the Chittagong district in the south-east, and the extreme southern part of the modern Midnapur district, then included in Orissa, in the south-west. Further it included the whole of northern Bihar and the greater part of southern Bihar including Patna and the district of Monghyr as its north-west wing, and Kām-rūp-Kāmtā, corresponding to the modern districts of Kām-rūp and Goalpara, together with Kuch Bihar as its north-eastern wing; plus, in the east, the district of Sylhet and parts of the state of Tippera.

The inclusion of the whole of northern Bihar and part of southern Bihar in Husain Shāh's dominions is indisputably proved by his inscriptions found at Saran (the western-most district of north-Bihar),<sup>2</sup> Bonhara (Patna),<sup>3</sup> Barh (22 miles north-east of the town of Bihar)<sup>4</sup> and Monghyr.<sup>5</sup> The recent discovery of one of his inscriptions at Kharid, situated on the right bank of the Ghaghra about 26 miles north of the Ballia town in Uttar Pradesh, even shows that his territories were pushed up to the eastern limits of the Uttar Pradesh. The inscription is broken and its date-portion is lost, but the surviving part of the text clearly records the construction of a *jāmi'* mosque there by Husain Shāh.<sup>6</sup> Describing this inscription W.H. Siddiqi reasonably

<sup>1</sup> Bābur mentions about Hindu soldiers in the army of Husain Shāh's son Nuṣrat Shāh, *Memoirs of Bābur* (tr. A.S. Beveridge), London, 1921, 673.

<sup>2</sup> J.A.S.B., 1874, 304 n. The inscription is dated Sha'bān, 906/March, 1501.

<sup>3</sup> P.A.S.B., 1870, 297. The inscription is dated Dhu al-Qa'dah, 908/June, 1502.

<sup>4</sup> Dani, *Bibliography*, 137-138. The inscription is dated 907/1501-2.

<sup>5</sup> J.A.S.B., 1872, 335.

<sup>6</sup> E.I.A.P.S., 1961, 45-46.



observes that the extension of Husain Shāh's jurisdiction in that region must have followed the period of confusion resulting from the break-up of the Jaunpur Sultānat which previously included the Kharid locality. We know, states Siddiqi, that the "Bengal king entered into a non-aggression agreement with Sikandar Lodi... Which was followed by delimitation of the frontiers. At what lines the two frontiers met is nowhere mentioned, but the Bengal occupation of the whole of north Bihar including the trans-Gandak area upto Kharid is proved by Husain Shāh's inscriptions at various places in north Bihar and at Kharid. This may have taken place soon after, either in accordance with the terms of the treaty or was a result of military operations started immediately on Sikandar's withdrawal from the above regions."<sup>1</sup> In any case the inscription "indicates the extension of Bengal authority upto Kharid in the west during Husain Shāh's reign itself and not during [sic, during] the time of his son and successor Nuṣrat Shāh, as is generally believed on the basis of the latter's inscription from the same place..."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly the conquest and annexation of Kāmrūp and Kāmtā, as mentioned above, is well established by numismatic and epigraphic evidence. The northern boundary of the Bengal Sultānat thus ran along the northern limits of Bihar towards the east through Jalpaiguri district right upto Hajo or Barnadi, the eastern limit of Kāmrūp. From that point the eastern frontier followed the course of the river Brahmaputra to the south of Kāmrūp-Kāmtā and then reaching the northern-most point of the Mymensingh district it took a turn to the east along the southern foot of the Gāro, Khasia and Jaintia hills, thus including within its fold Mymensingh and Sylhet districts.<sup>3</sup> From that point it took a southerly direction along the Saraspur hills and the northern and western boundaries of the state of Tripura, including some territories of the latter; and, finally, following more or less the present frontiers of the Noakhali and Chittagong districts, it reached the river Karnafuli. Probably some territories to the south

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>3</sup> See the Sylhet inscription, *op. cit.*, and the Atia (Mymensingh) inscription, dated 7 Jamādī II, 913/14 October, 1507, *J.B.O.R.S.*, IV, 1918, 184.

of that river were also included in the Bengal Sultanat. The southern boundary ran along the northern skirts of the Sundarban forests including the districts of Barisal, Khulna and 24-Parganas. As mentioned above, Khalifatabād (modern Bagerhat in Khulna district) was a mint-town during Ḥusain Shāh's reign from where the Crown Prince Nusrat Shāh issued coins as early as 922/1516.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Tribeni inscription of Ḥusain Shāh specifically mentions, along with other places, Hādīgar or modern Hatiagarh, a few miles south of Diamond Harbour (on the Hugli, in 24-Parganas district) as within the jurisdiction of the Sultān.<sup>2</sup> The western boundary of the Sultanat followed the course of the Rājmahal hills (now in the Santāl Parganas of Bihar) towards the south, thus encompassing the districts of Birbhum, Bankura and northern Midnapur, meeting with the river Kasāi (Haldi) which, flowing in a south-easterly direction meets the river Hugli some 20 miles south of Diamond Harbour. This river (Haldi) was most probably the boundary line between the Bengal Sultanat and the kingdom of Orissa in the south-west. The accounts of the Portuguese writers de Barros and Barbosa indicate this.

#### IV: ḤUSAIN SHĀH'S PEACEFUL ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite his preoccupations almost throughout his reign with wars on all his frontiers Ḥusain Shāh is noted equally for his peaceful achievements. As indicated earlier, he started his reign by recalling and reinstating in their former positions the old nobility whom the Abyssinian regime had forced into the background, and by entrusting suitable Muslims of Arab, Afghan and other foreign origins with responsible administrative positions in the state. From the very beginning he devoted himself to the promotion of Islam and Muslims in the state with due toleration and consideration for his non-Muslim subjects as well. In pursuance of this policy and following the example of some of his predecessors he declared himself, as early as the second year of his accession, "Khalīfa of Allah by proof and evidence" and a "fighter in the cause of the Most Merciful" (المجاهد في سبيل الرحمن خليفة).<sup>3</sup> The title of *Khalīfa of Allah* etc. occurs on at

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 189. See also *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 297.

<sup>2</sup> *E.I.M.*, 1915-1916, 12-13, plate IV a.

<sup>3</sup> Malda inscription of 11 Shawwāl, 900/5 July 1495, *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, 302, *Memoirs*, 150.

least three other inscriptions,<sup>1</sup> while expressions like "Fighter in the way of Allah", "Fighter against the enemies of Allah" etc. occur in a number of other inscriptions.<sup>2</sup> In one of his inscriptions Husain Shāh describes himself as "the victorious and respectable Imām" who "expounds the word of Allah".<sup>3</sup> This role of him as a promoter of Islam is emphasized specially in three other inscriptions where he is described as the "one who holds high the words of truth and piety (i.e. Islam)", (معلی کلمات الحق والحسنات), "the help and succor of Islam" (غوث الإسلام والمسلمين), etc.<sup>4</sup> On a number of his hitherto discovered coins, ranging between the years 899 and 919 (1494 and 1513 A.C.), the *Kalima* (لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله) appears,<sup>5</sup> while on one of the coins the names of the first four *Khalīfas* are inscribed.<sup>6</sup> This latter fact probably shows that Husain Shāh set before himself the ideal of the four "Rightly Guided Khalīfas". Similarly his patronage of Islam and his efforts to propagate it in his realm is evident from a large number of mosques which he caused to be erected at different places of the Sultanat. Of about 60 of his inscriptions hitherto discovered, at least 30 relate to the construction at different dates and places of mosques and *Jāmi'* mosques, and at least 2 record the construction of gates to two *Jāmi'* mosques. Of these the Sultan himself is mentioned as the builder in connection with five *Jāmi'* mosques, of a gate of one *Jāmi'* mosque, and of three other mosques. The rest were erected at the instance of his governors and other officers. It may be mentioned that not all that were built during his time have come to light. For the same purpose of disseminating Islam and for raising well-trained personnel for the purpose the Sultan built at least one "illustrious madarasa" near Gaud in 907/1502 for the specific purpose of "teaching the sciences of the

<sup>1</sup> Gaud (Qadam Rasul Building) inscription, dated 22 Muharram, 909/1503, *Memoirs*, 63 n. 1; Firūzpūr (Gaud, Chota Sona Masjid) inscription, dated 14 Rājab, year missing, *ibid.*, 79-80; and another inscription, probably from the Chota Sona Masjid, Gaud, but now in the Indian Museum, dated 27 Ramadān, year not mentioned, *E.I.M.*, 1933-34, 6.

<sup>2</sup> See Dani, *Bibliography*, inscriptions Nos. 74, 81, 83, 116, 119.

<sup>3</sup> Saran (Ismailpur, Bihar) inscription, dated Sha'bān, 907/March, 1501, *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 304 n., also Dani, *Bibliography*, No. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Dani, *op. cit.*, Nos. 116, 119, 121.

<sup>5</sup> *Car. II.*, Nos. 167-174, 193, 199-201.

<sup>6</sup> Lane-Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 45, No. 118, pl. V.

religion and imparting instructions in the injunctions of the faith" (لتدريس علوم الدين وتعليم احكام اليقين).<sup>1</sup>

Thus Husain Shah championed the cause of Islam in his state policy. It is strange, therefore, that in the face of the above mentioned evidence the monographer of Husain Shāhi Bengal has stated that Husain Shāh dissociated Islam from state affairs and that he was "probably following a non-religious policy".<sup>2</sup> The writer does not of course mention the above facts from epigraphic sources, and concentrates his attention on the absence of any coin of the Sultān containing the expression "succor of Islam and the Muslims" (غوث الإسلام والمسلمين), and then rather abruptly comes to the obviously wrong conclusion that Husain Shāh "made a complete departure" from the policy of his predecessors and dissociated Islam from state policies. About the presence of the *Kalima* on the coins the author writes: the "*Kalima* which appears only on a few coins may be regarded as a traditional feature of their coinage without any religious significance" and that "the names of the first four Caliphs found on the margin of a single coin indicate simply their connection with the Sayyids of Arabia".<sup>3</sup> The explanation is both superficial and incorrect. The absence of any *Ghauth al-Islam* type of coins might simply be due to the non-discovery of all his coins. Moreover, it is clearly inconsistent to argue that Husain Shāh deliberately dropped the phrase *Ghauth-al-Islam* from his coins in order to dissociate Islam from his state policies and then to say that he maintained the *Kalima* on the coins only to conform to a traditional feature. Again, it is not on a few coins, but on quite a number of them, that the *Kalima* is inscribed. Whatever negative inference might be made from the absence of *Ghauth al-Islam* phrase on the coins, it is more than counter-balanced by the positive evidence afforded by a number of inscriptions containing this particular title and similar other expressions. Similarly the inference about the names of the four *Khalifas* on a coin is inconsequential. There is no instance in Islamic history of invoking their names by way of

<sup>1</sup> English Bazar (Malda) inscription, dated 1 Ramadan, 907/10 March, 1502, *Memoirs*, 157-158.

<sup>2</sup> M.R. Tarafdar, *Husain Shāhi Bengal*, Dacca, 1965, 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

indicating one's relationship with the family of the Prophet (Peace be on him).<sup>1</sup> Equally misleading is the observation made in connection with the construction of mosques that these, together with the tanks and bridges, "increased the facilities for travel and greatly facilitated the internal trade of the country".<sup>2</sup> Tanks and bridges did of course facilitate trade and travel, but the construction of so many mosques had definitely a fundamentally different and more significant purpose than promotion of trade and travel.

The fact was that Husain Shah was neither non-religious, nor did he dissociate Islam from his state policies. It may be pointed out here that the concept of "state" and "religion" as separate entities is foreign to Islam. It appeared prominently in Europe during the later middle ages in connection with the struggle between the "Empire" and the Papacy when much was made out of the Biblical precept, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's". The distinction then made between "God's" and "Caesar's" jurisdictions was in fact much blurred subsequently during the emergence of national states in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when many of the "national" kings combined in themselves the headships of the Church and the State. The most notable instance in point is that of Henry VIII, for some years Husain Shāh's contemporary on the throne of England. In more recent times the concept has of course been used for various purposes but it was quite unknown in pre-modern Bengal. It is therefore neither necessary nor justifiable to transpose the concept on an even earlier period of Bengal history and make Husain Shāh appear what he was not, nor could have been.

The fact that Husain Shāh identified himself and his policies with Islam does not mean that he was in any way intolerant of the non-Muslims in his dominions. On the contrary he was tolerant towards them in an uncommon degree. He appointed a number of them in suitable posts in the state service. The contemporary and near-contemporary Bengali literature, written by Hindus, makes mention of many such officers — Jagāi and Mādhāi as *Kotwāls* of

<sup>1</sup> Probably the inference is based on the Shi'ite practice of invoking the name of the fourth Khalifa 'Ali; but Husain Shāh was not a Shi'ite, nor did he show any special regard for that Khalifa. It is also not clear what is meant by "their connection with the Sayyids of Arabia".

<sup>2</sup> Tarafdar, *op. cit.*, 113.

Navadvipa, Gopinath Vasu as his minister, Rupa as *Sarkar Malik*, Sanātan as *Dabīr-i-Khās*, Rāmchandra Khān as a border officer in the south-west, Mukunda Dās as a royal physician, Keshava Khān Chhatrī as the chief bodyguard of the Sultān, Anupa as mint-officer, etc.<sup>1</sup> Reference has already been made to Gaud Mallik who commanded an expedition to Tippera. Ḥusain Shāh's two successive governors at Chittagong, Parāgal Khān and Chutī Khān patronized and encouraged the two contemporary poets Paramesvara and Śrīkara Nandī in translating the *Mahābhārata* into Bengali. The Sultān himself commissioned Mālādhār Basu, another contemporary poet, to translate the *Bhagavatgītā* into Bengali. The latter and other poets of the time like Vipradās and Jaśorāj Khān mention the Sultān's name with gratitude. Similarly Vijayagupta, another contemporary poet who composed the *Manasāmangal* probably early in Ḥusain Shāh's reign extols him as the "Crown of King" (*Nripati Tilak*) and "Adornment of the Universe" (*Jagat Bhusan*). Chaitanya, the Hindu reformer who lived and preached his doctrines during Ḥusain Shāh's time, was given complete freedom of preaching within the Sultanat,<sup>2</sup> although the new movement was as much aimed at arresting the progress of Islam among the Hindus as that of reforming Hinduism itself, and although it created at least some defection among the Sultān's Hindu officials. For instance, after Chaitanya's meeting with Sanātan at Gaud, the latter, who was a *Dabīr-i-Khās*, refused to accompany the Sultān on his Orissa campaign and was in consequence imprisoned. Later on Sanātan joined Chaitanya at Benares, probably in 1516.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of such tolerance on Ḥusain Shāh's part, some modern Hindu writers have accused him of having oppressed the Hindus. They do so on the basis of a few doubtful and uncorroborated episodes mentioned by the Vaishnava writers. One of the episodes is that of Subudhi Rāi, mentioned earlier. Two other episodes refer to the Sultān's alleged destruction of temples during the Orissa campaign and his suppression of a

<sup>1</sup> Brindāvana Dās, *Chaitanya Bhāgavat*, 8, 82, 205, 316 and 350; Krishnadās Kavirāj, *Chaitanyacharitamrita*, 76, 278, 293; both quoted in *H.B.*, II, 51 and Tarafdar, *op. cit.*, 64-65.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance S. Sen., *op. cit.*, 189.

<sup>3</sup> Sisirkumar Ghosh, *Amiya Nimāi Charit*, V., 46-48, 52-58, quoted in *H.B.*, II, 148, n. 3.

group of seditious Navadvipa Brāhmans. The Subudhi Rai episode, as pointed out already, is both unlikely and opposed to well-known facts. At its most the incident could be cited as an instance of personal retaliation rather than of a general anti-Hindu policy. The other two episodes are, by the very admissions of the writers themselves, well explained as incidences of war and sedition. The episodes, if true, do not appear in any way as isolated events. The existence of a group of seditious Brāhmans in Navadvipa, the rise of Chaitanya from that very city and also from the Brāhmana caste, his visit to Orissa at the very time when the Sultān was engaged in a deadly conflict with that country, Chaitanya's visit to Gauḍ after his return from Orissa and Sanātān's subsequent defection, etc., all seem to have an underlying connection between them. Against the background of these developments the rise of Vaishnavism itself needs a re-examination. Pending that, however, it may be noted that the Vaishnavite writers who allude to the above mentioned incidents of the Sultān's alleged oppression themselves entertain a very favourable opinion about the latter. Therefore, to press their stories into building up an anti-Hindu policy on the part of the Sultān, as done by some modern Hindu writers, would not appear quite consistent.

Ḥusain Shāh was as tolerant and benevolent in times of peace as he was strong and unsparing in dealing with wars and sedition. Himself a learned man, he patronized men of letters of every creed. One of his inscriptions speaks of him as "the most learned and just" Sultān.<sup>1</sup> He administered justice with strict impartiality. A number of inscriptions emphasize this quality of his and calls him 'Ādil.<sup>2</sup> Due to his even-handed justice, records one inscription, "a lamb did not conceal itself from the wolf."<sup>3</sup> He was equally alive to the comforts of his people, for ensuring which he constructed a number of tanks for drinking water at different places of his dominions,<sup>4</sup> and bridges for facilitating communications.<sup>5</sup> Besides the mosques mentioned earlier, he had also a

<sup>1</sup> Gauḍ (Qadam Rasul) inscription, dated 22 Muharram, 999/1503, *Memoirs*, 63, n 1.

<sup>2</sup> Se Dani, *Bibliography*, inscriptions Nos. 86, 93, 94, 111, 121.

<sup>3</sup> Jahanabad Inscription, *ibid.*, No. 122

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 89, 100, 102, 110, 111.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 93, 122.

number of other buildings constructed. Thus by his achievements in war as well as in peace, by his patronage of learning and literature, his architectural activities and benevolent works, his tolerance towards his non-Muslim subjects, and, above all by his patronage of Islam and the Muslims, Sultān Ḥusain Shāh was an outstanding figure in Muslim Bengal history. "He is even now-a-days remembered by the people;", wrote Blochmann in 1870, "and numerous legends and stories, current in the villages of Bengal, refer to the times of Ḥusain Shāh the Good. Even the geography of the country re-echoes his name. The Parganah of Husainabad in the Gaur district, the Masjid Husain Shahi in Ghoraghat, Husain Shahi in Sirkar Bazuha (Mymensingh), the parganahs of Husainpur and Husain Ujyal in the Sarkars of Sharifabad and Sulaimanabad remind us of his name. In the south of Burdwan especially, and in the north of the present district of Hugli, Ḥusain Shāh plays a prominent part in the legends of the peasantry. In Mayapur, which lies west of Chinsurah, in the Parganah of Bairah about 7 miles from the right bank of the Damodar, a Masjid and a tank still exist which were completed by Ḥusain Shāh; and about 12 miles N.E. of Mayapur, there is a village Shah Husainpur, which was called so to perpetuate his memory."<sup>1</sup>

The last dated inscription of Ḥusain Shāh is the Sunārgāon inscription of 925/1519, while the earliest inscription of his son Nuṣrat Shāh is the Gaud (Dākhil Darwāzā) inscription of 926/1520. This latter inscription, as G. Yazdani rightly observes, "enables us to assert that in 926 (1520) Nuṣrat Shāh was already on the throne, and had assumed the imperial title."<sup>2</sup> The evidence of coins is inconclusive in this respect, for Nuṣrat Shāh was allowed to issue coins as Crown Prince as early as 922/1516. Ḥusain Shāh's reign thus came to an end most probably between 925 and 926. All the sources state that he died peacefully.

<sup>1</sup> "Places of Historical interest in Hugh", *P.A.S.B.*, April, 1870, 112-113

<sup>2</sup> *E.I.M.*, 1911-12, 7.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE ARAB DYNASTY II: NUŞRAT SHĀH AND HIS SUCCESSORS

Nāṣir al-Dīn Nuṣrat Shāh was the eldest of the eighteen sons of Ḥusain Shāh, Prince Dāniyāl having died earlier. Although Nuṣrat Shāh was selected by his father as the Crown Prince and was allowed to issue coins and perform other royal duties, the nobles appear to have had a final say about his succession. Both Nizām al-Dīn and Firishta state that after Ḥusain Shāh's death the grāndeēs and nobles of the time selected Nuṣrat Shāh for the throne.<sup>1</sup> Echoing them the *Riyāḍ* states: "When Sultān 'Alāu-d-dīn Ḥusain Shāh died, the adherents of the kingdom and the members of the government placed on the throne his eldest son, named Nuṣrat Shāh, commonly known as Naṣīb Shāh, who was wise and just, and well-behaved, and in affairs of administration was more proficient than his other brothers."<sup>2</sup> The selection was unanimous and Nuṣrat's other brothers obviously also supported him, for it is added that the "most laudable work that he performed was that, instead of imprisoning his brothers, he doubled the offices [pay and allowances] which had been conferred on the latter by their father."<sup>3</sup> On accession Nuṣrat Shāh assumed the name of Nāṣir al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar Nuṣrat Shāh. According to a recently discovered inscription he was also known as Nāṣir Shāh,<sup>4</sup> which confirms the *Riyāḍ*'s statement that he was commonly known as Naṣīb (Nāṣir) Shāh, and that his another title was Qutb al-Dīn.

#### I: THE FIRST PEACEFUL HALF OF NUŞRAT'S REIGN

Nuṣrat Shāh's reign may be divided into two almost equal halves. The first half, from 926/1520 to 932/1526, was a period of peace without any external trouble, which enabled him to devote himself entirely to a continuation of his father's policies of consolidation and reconstruction. Of a total of 23 inscriptions of

<sup>1</sup> *Tab. Ak.* (Newal Kishore edn.), 526; *Tārīkh-i-Firishta*, II., (Lucknow edn.), 302.

<sup>2</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 134.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Begusari undated inscription, now in the Patna Museum, *E.I.A.P.S.*, 1961, 43.

his reign so far discovered, 11 belong to the first half. These 11 inscriptions show that during this period at least five mosques at such different places as Sunārgāon (Dacca), Ashrafpur (Dacca), Navagrām (Pabna), Mangalkot (Burdwan) and Malda were constructed by the Sultān's officers and administrators; while the Sultān himself caused two great *jāmi'* mosques to be built, the one at Bāghā, Rajshahi and the other, the famous Bara Sonā Mosque (The Great Golden Mosque) at Gaud. Besides these he had also constructed during this period a gate, supposed to be the *Dākhil Darwāzā* of the Gaud Fort,<sup>1</sup> and the gateway to the tomb of the famous Shaikh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn in 931/1525. These building activities are a fair index to his patronage of the cause of Islam and his application to the task of peaceful reconstruction from the beginning of his reign. Another important feature of his rule was his benevolence and justice for which he had already earned a reputation by the time he came upon the throne. His earliest inscription (Gaud inscription of 926/1520) informs us that he was "well-known for justice and benevolence" (المعروف بالعدل والاحسان).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this character of the Sultān is also reflected in the selection, early in his reign, of Taqī al-Dīn ibn 'Ain al-Dīn, who was the "chief of the lawyers and teachers of Ḥadīth" (قادة الفقهاء والمحدثين) as the "Principal noble and minister" (ملك الأمراء والوزراء) a post or rank which appears for the first time during Nušrat's reign.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the territory of the Bengal Sultanat was extended in the west upto Kharid in U.P. Nušrat Shāh continued to maintain his hold over that region. This is shown by his Sikandarpur (near Azamgarh) inscription of 27 Rajab, 933/29 April, 1527 which records the construction of a mosque there by his governor (*Sar-i-Lashkar*) Khān-i-A'zam Mukhtiyār Khān.<sup>4</sup> The *Riyāḍ*, however, alludes to some military undertaking in that quarter and states that after having captured and killed "the Rājāh of Tirhut" Nušrat Shāh appointed his two

<sup>1</sup> G. Yazdani in *E.I.M.*, 1911-12, 5. Dr. Dani, however, thinks that the inscription being the earliest of the reign, "can hardly refer to the *Dākhil Darwāzā*". (*Bibliography*, 67).

<sup>2</sup> *E.I.M.*, 1911-12, 7; and pl. XXXI.

<sup>3</sup> Sunārgāon inscription of 929/1523, *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 337-338.

<sup>4</sup> *E.I.A.P.S.*, 1961, 47-48.

brothers-in-law, 'Alā' al-Dīn and Makhdūm 'Ālam, "for the conquest of the limits of Tirhut and Hajipur, and posted them there."<sup>1</sup> The whole of the Tirhut division including Saran, as noted above, had been under Husain Shāh's jurisdiction. Similarly Hajipur, situated opposite to Patna on the northern bank of the confluence of the Ganges and the Gnadak, had been the headquarters of the Bengal governor of Bihar since the time of Ilyās Shāh (Hajī Ilyās) who founded the city and after whom it was named. The *Riyād*'s statement might therefore refer to the suppression of some unsuccessful rebel or chieftain in the region. In any case the doubt entertained by a scholar about Nuṣrat Shāh's position in that region, while commenting on the above mentioned Silkandarpur inscription, is untenable. He writes: "It is strange that Nuṣrat Shāh does not bear the title of Sultān at all. He is simply called *Malik*."<sup>2</sup> The phrase — جعل الله في زمرة عبادہ (May God place him among the number of his servants) used in place of the usual خلد الله ملكه وسلطانه [May Allah perpetuate his kingdom and rule] throws further doubt on the real position of Nuṣrat Shāh."<sup>3</sup> The phrase spoken of here is Blochmann's reading which is followed by the scholar but which has been recently read differently by W.H. Siddiqi<sup>4</sup> who further observes: "there is no question about the real position of Nuṣrat Shāh; he is definitely intended as the king. That the use of the title 'Malik' is meant for the king, especially in Bengal inscriptions, has already been shown elsewhere."<sup>5</sup> Also, in view of the statement of emperor Bābur confirming the jurisdiction of the Bengal monarch over Kharid, there should be no doubt at all about Nuṣrat Shāh's position there. The rather inadvertent omission of the benedictory phrase خلد الله ملكه وسلطانه alone should not be taken as implying any doubt about the royal position of Nuṣrat Shāh."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 134.

<sup>2</sup> The whole expression in the inscription is

في عهد الملك العادل ناصر الدنيا والدين أيرالمظفر نصرتشاه بن حسين شاه السلطان

<sup>3</sup> *Bibliography*, 70.

<sup>4</sup> W.H. Siddiqi, (*E.I.A.P.S.*, 1961, 47) reads جعل الله الرب المجيد في أعز أعباده and holds that it refers to the builder meaning "May Allah the Glorified Lord make him (i.e. the builder) one of his most favourite grandees..."

<sup>5</sup> *E.I.A.P.S.*, 1953 and 54, 20, n 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1961, 48. Bābur mentions about Bengal's jurisdiction over Kharid in his *Memoirs* (ed. Beverage), II., Oxford, 1921, 363.

## II: COMING OF THE MUGHALS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE BENGAL SULTANAT

The coming of the Mughals under Zāhīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur once again upset the balance of political power in northern India. On 21 April 1526 Bābur defeated and killed Ibrāhīm Lūdī in the field of Panipat and thus laid the foundation of Mughal dominion in India. As in the case of the Jaunpur Sultān who was forced by the Lūdīs to seek asylum in Bengal, so it was now the turn of the Lūdīs to flee towards the Bengal Sultanat for protection. A large number of the Afghan (Lūdī) nobles found refuge with Nuṣrat Shāh who, we are told, bestowed on all of them "parganahs and villages, in accordance with their respective rank and condition, and consistently with the resources of his kingdom."<sup>1</sup> He also married the deceased Sultān Ibrāhīm Lūdī's daughter who had come to Bengal along with the fleeing Afghan nobles.<sup>2</sup> Nuṣrat's considerations were presumably both humanitarian and political. Husain Shāh's treaty with Sikandar Lūdī had established a new balance of power. Bābur's victory over the Lūdīs destroyed that balance. Nuṣrat could not naturally remain indifferent to these new developments. As Husain Shāh had maintained the fugitive Jaunpur Sultān and his followers, not to help them regain the lost kingdom, but to use them as a bargaining factor in his negotiations with the Lūdī power, so also Nuṣrat Shāh adopted the same tactics. The suggestion that Nuṣrat Shāh engaged himself in building up an anti-Mughal coalition<sup>3</sup> is not borne out by the facts, and has as such been discarded as groundless.<sup>4</sup> Bābur's immediate attention was directed not towards the fugitive Afghans in Bengal, but to the formidable coalition of the Hindu chiefs under Rānā Sangrām Singh of Mewar. The latter had hoped that Bābur would break the Lūdī kingdom for him and would then retire from India, as Timur had done. As that did not happen, Sangrām Singh placed himself at the head of a coalition of some 120 Hindu chiefs and advanced against Bābur with an overwhelming army including 80,000

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *H.B.*, II., 153-155.

<sup>4</sup> *Taraḡdar*, *op. cit.*, 70-72.

horse and 500 war elephants. Under the circumstances Bābur naturally wanted to prevent the accession of others like the Bengal ruler and the fugitive Afghans to the enemy camp. Hence, early in 1527 Bābur sent an envoy to Nuṣrat Shāh asking for his neutrality in the ensuing contest. Realizing Bābur's preoccupations, Nuṣrat was in no hurry to give any positive reply. His procrastination, however, well served Bābur's purpose. Although far outnumbered by his enemies, he signally defeated Rānā Sangrām Singh in the battle of Khānua (Sikri) on 16 March 1527. The latter managed to escape from the field, but "the route of the Hindu host was complete and final." Bābur rounded off this victory by capturing the Chanderi fort from a confederate of the Rānā on 29 January, 1528. After this he turned his attention to the Afghans in Oudh and elsewhere. Sending an envoy to Bengal, Babur sought to know if Nuṣrat Shāh was "friendly and single-minded".<sup>1</sup> The latter thought it inadvisable to make further delay and professed neutrality by sending his envoy, Ismā'īl Mitha, with presents to Bābur.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the Afghans in Oudh and south Bihar under their leaders like Maḥmūd Shāh, a brother of Ibrāhīm Lūdī, Sher Khān (later on Sher Shāh) and Jalāl Khān, attempted to organize themselves against the Mughals, but as soon as Bābur advanced against them they fell back. In order to haunt them down Bābur now demanded free passage of his army through the trans-Ghagra territory of Nuṣrat Shāh; and as the latter hesitated and temporised, Bābur applied force, defeated a contingent of the Bengal Sultān posted there and occupied the territory upto Saran. Further trouble was averted by the prompt conclusion of a treaty by Nuṣrat Shāh's military governor of Monghyr who accepted on behalf of the Sultān all the terms dictated by Bābur. Shortly afterwards the latter died in 1530 and in the following year his son Humāyūn inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Afghans at Daurah. After that it was rumoured that he would advance upon Bengal. To counteract this possibility Nuṣrat Shāh sent an envoy to Bahādur Shāh of Gurjrat, seeking his alliance.<sup>3</sup> Humāyūn did not, however, march against Bengal at that time. The mission to

<sup>1</sup> Bābur's *Memoirs*, (tr. Beveridge), II, 628.

<sup>2</sup> *Riyāṭ*, 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

Gujarat, though well received, did not also result in any definite alliance during the lifetime of Nuṣrat Shāh.

The troubles arising out of Bābur's advent in northern India and Nuṣrat Shāh's preoccupations with them encouraged the Ahom king to attempt to dislodge the Muslims from Kām-rūp-Kāmtā. He did not succeed, however, on account of the vigilance and abilities of Nuṣrat Shah's governor in that region.

### III: LATER YEARS OF NUṢRAT SHĀH

In spite of the Mughal threat and the loss of a strip of territory in the north-west, the second half of Nuṣrat's reign was equally full of constructive activities. The year of the battle of Panipat (1526) witnessed the foundation of the Bara Sonā Masjid (Great Golden Mosque) at Gaud. Construction of other mosques and buildings continued apace. No less than 12 inscriptions of this later part of his reign refer to the erection at different places by him and others under him of four general mosques, four *Jāmi'* mosques, one tank for drinking water, an entrance-gate of a mosque and the famous Qadam Rasūl Building of Gaud. In fact the last mentioned structure was constructed in 937/1531, a year before Nuṣrat Shāh's death.<sup>1</sup> The general mosques mentioned above were, one at Sikandarpur (Azamgarh, U.P.), erected in 933/1527, another at Deotala, erected in 936/1531-32.<sup>2</sup> The four *Jāmi'* mosques were, one at Gaud, erected in 933/1527, two at Sātgaon, Hugli, in 936/1529, and the other at Malda (Solpur, date of the inscription broken).<sup>3</sup> The entrance to the *Jāmi'* mosque and the tank were both constructed at old Malda.<sup>4</sup> Besides, a gate was constructed at Murshidabad also.<sup>5</sup> There were also other building activities of which the records have not come to light. For instance, the building activities of the Sultān at the Chittagong region are not known from any epigraphic source; but these are clearly alluded to by the *Aḥādīth al-Khawānīn* or *Tārīkh-i-Hamīdī*, a mid-nineteenth century Persian history of that district. The author, Maulavi Hāmidullah, writes: "Of the antiquities

<sup>1</sup> Gaud (Qadam Rasul) Inscription, Dani, *Bibliography*, No. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Inscriptions Nos. 133, 134, 141 and 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 132, 137, 138, 143.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 130, 140.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 136.

which point to this religious king, I may mention Mauza Fathabād, which was so called in remembrance of the conquest (fath), and also the great tank in Fathabād and the mosque there, which was built of enamelled bricks. I have myself seen Nuṣrat's mosque with its coloured bricks; but it is now broken and ruined and filled with rubbish. His great tank, the length of which is 700 paces, more or less, still exists, but the water has become bad... People also say that a pucca house stood near it, which decayed and got covered with jungle and full of snakes. Hence people set it on fire, and burnt it down with the serpents and all... The foundation of the town of Bhaluah, and the digging of the Bhaluah tank, are generally referred to the time of Nuṣrat Shāh."<sup>1</sup>

As in the case of his father's reign, Nuṣrat Shāh's reign also witnessed the influx into Bengal of Muslims from other countries. Besides the host of Afghans who fled to Bengal on account of the Mughal pressure we have indication of others having come and settled in Bengal at that time. The Deotala inscription of 934/1528, for instance, which records the construction of a *Jāmi'* mosque there, contains the significant expression that the mosque was built "in the territory of Shaikh Jalāl Muḥammad Tabrez."<sup>2</sup> This Shaikh Jalāl Muḥammad was a different person from his celebrated namesake of Sylhet. Shaikh Jalāl Muḥammad Tabrezī was obviously a newcomer, and most probably he was accompanied by a sizeable group who settled at the spot, and most probably the place was so characterized because of this settlement and because of his merit as a preacher and religious teacher.

Like his father, again, Nuṣrat Shāh followed a policy of tolerance towards his non-Muslim subjects and extended his patronage to the development of Bengali literature. He is said to have commissioned a Bengali translation of the *Mahābhārata*, or rather the continuation of the work of its translation started during his father's time. It was most probably because of the interest shown by the Sultān in the matter that Chhuṭī Khān, his governor of Chittagong, had the work translated by poet Śrīkara Nandī. Other poets also flourished during Nuṣrat Shāh's time.

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Hamidi*, Calcutta, 1871, 17, quoted and translated by Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, 337.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs*, 171.

The last days of Nuṣrat Shāh were, we are told by the *Riyād*, marred "by dissipations and sundry oppressions".<sup>1</sup> No specific instance of such alleged injustice or tyranny is, however, mentioned by the *Riyād* nor by any other authority. On the contrary, several inscriptions of the second half of the reign continue to mention Nuṣrat Shāh as the "just ruler" and the "just Sultān".<sup>2</sup> It appears, however, that towards the end of his reign a struggle for succession to the throne was developing. Numismatic evidence suggests that as early as 933/1527 Nuṣrat Shāh had nominated his brother Maḥmūd for succession and had allowed him to issue coins.<sup>3</sup> This is perhaps alluded to by the *Riyād* which states that Nuṣrat Shāh had installed Maḥmūd "to the rank of a nobleman" who "conducted himself like an ameer" during the former's lifetime.<sup>4</sup> Maḥmūd's nomination as successor, or at least his prominence and influence during the later days of Nuṣrat Shāh, does not appear to have the support of all the nobles. A section of them favoured Nuṣrat's son Fīrūz. As subsequent events show, Nuṣrat Shāh's brother-in-law and governor of Hajipur, Makhdūm 'Ālam, was a leader of this opposing faction. It was amidst this growing tension that Nuṣrat shah was assassinated by a eunuch whom the Sultān is stated to have earlier punished for a fault.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the assassination of Nuṣrat Shāh was not an isolated act of crime on the part of the eunuch. Significantly enough, it is further stated that the latter had "leagued with other eunuchs" for committing the crime. The alleged sundry oppressions spoken of by the *Riyād* might have some political significance and, also, they might refer to some strong measures which Nuṣrat Shāh had adopted against his opponents.

#### IV: 'ALĀ' AL-DĪN ABŪ AL-MUẒAFFAR FĪRŪZ SHĀH (III)

After Nuṣrat Shāh's assassination the partisans of Fīrūz Shāh placed him on the throne. He assumed the title of 'Alā' al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar Fīrūz Shāh. His reign appears to have lasted for about a year only, from 938/1532 to at least the month of

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 136.

<sup>2</sup> See Dani, *Bibliography*, inscriptions Nos. 133, 135, 137 and 138.

<sup>3</sup> Cat. II, p. 179, No. 222.

<sup>4</sup> *Riyād*, 137.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.



Ramaḍān 939/1533. The latter date is ascertained from his only inscription found on the ground in front of a ruined mosque, called the *Shāhī Masjid* outside Kalna in Burdwan district of south-west Bengal, about half a mile from the Bhagirathi river.<sup>1</sup> It records the construction there of a *Jāmi'* mosque by his "Commander and Wazir" (*Sar-i-Lashkar and Wazir*), the Great Malīk Ulugh Masnad-i-Khās Malīk<sup>2</sup> on the 1st day of the auspicious month of Ramaḍān 939/27 March 1533. Some of Firuz Shāh's coins dated 939/1533 have also come to light.<sup>3</sup>

During his short and necessarily stormy reign the war with the Ahoms in the north-east continued with varying success. According to the Assamese sources the Muslim general Turbak, after defeating the Ahom forces at Singri, captured the strong fortress of Sala. The advantage thus gained was however neutralized by the defeat of the Muslims in two subsequent engagements on the Dikrai river (Sibsagar district) and the Bharali river (Tezpur district). In the latter battle Turbak lost his life and a large number of artillery and elephants were captured by the Assamese.<sup>4</sup> The Muslim hold on Kāmṛūp was not however lost during Firūz's reign, though during the troublous period that soon followed a Kuch adventurer, Biswa Singh, carved out an independent state of Kuch at the cost of both the Muslims and the Ahoms.

As a man Firūz was not devoid of good qualities. He appears to have inherited his father's and grandfather's interest in Bengali literature. While still a prince, he is stated to have encouraged and patronized the poet Śrīdhara to compose the *Vidyāsundara*, a versified romantic tale. The poet gratefully mentions the "pleasing virtues" of Firūz, his love of "all arts" and his wisdom and liberalism.<sup>5</sup> The poet's appreciation is corroborated in a large measure by the above mentioned Kalna inscription wherein Firūz Shāh is described as a "just ruler". Firūz Shāh's reign appears to have been cut short by the factious spirit of the nobles. At any rate

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1872, 132, 332; E.I.A.P.S., 1955-56, 24-26.

<sup>2</sup> Blochmann read the name as Khān Malīk. The revised reading is that of Z. A. Desai in E.I.A.P.S., 1955-56, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Cat., II., p. 179, Nos. 220-221.

<sup>4</sup> E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1906, 89-91.

<sup>5</sup> The *Vidyāsundara*, reproduced in the *Sāhitya Patrikā*, Dacca, 1364 B.E., 118, 120, 123.

his uncle Maḥmūd Shāh, whom he and his partisans had deprived of succession, soon got the upper hand, had him killed, and then ascended the throne.

V: GHIYĀTH AL-DĪN ABŪ AL-MUZAFFAR MAḤMŪD SHĀH (III)

939-944/1533-1538

Al though Maḥmūd thus succeeded in getting the throne, the time and circumstances were against him. The troubles that had been mounting in north India since Nusrat Shāh's time now appeared in their full force. It was during Maḥmūd's reign that the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy entered its acute phase under the leadership of Humāyūn and Sher Khān (Shāh) respectively. Both these leaders, particularly Sher Khān, wanted to draw Bengal into the struggle and to use it as a stepping stone for gaining mastery over northern India. On the other hand, the Portuguese increasingly pressed on from the sea-side and intruded into the southern districts of Bengal; while within the ranks of the Sultān's own nobility there was now an irreparable cleavage. Maḥmūd's brother-in-law and governor of Hājipur, Makhdūm 'Ālam, who had espoused Fīrūz's cause, now turned a deadly enemy, and under the pretext of avenging Fīrūz's death but really to aggrandize himself, allied himself with Sher Khān to bring about Maḥmūd's ruin. Another noble named Khuda Bakhsh Khān (mentioned by the Portuguese as Codavascam), who was most probably a governor or general in the Chittagong region, assumed independence in the tract between the Karnāfulī river and the Ārākān hills.<sup>1</sup> It was now almost impossible for Maḥmūd, and for that matter for any one else, to cope successfully with all these troubles.

The attitude of Makhdūm 'Ālam of Hājipur (Patna) was most alarming. He had not recognized Maḥmūd's accession and was now in open alliance with Sher Khān. The latter had by then made himself master of south Bihar, setting at defiance the authority of his Luhānī suzerain Jalāl Khān. For self-protection, if not for anything else, it became necessary for Maḥmūd to bring Makhdūm 'Ālam to subjection. Accordingly Maḥmūd sent almost immediately after his accession his governor of Monghyr,

<sup>1</sup> Campos, *op. cit.*, 31-32, 42.

Qutb Khān, with an army against Makhdūm 'Ālam in 1533 (939 H.). Sher Khān immediately intervened in the matter and after trying to persuade Qutb Khān to abandon the expedition, himself fought Makhdūm 'Ālam's battle, defeated and killed Qutb Khān and captured a large quantity of treasures and military stores belonging to the Bengal army.<sup>1</sup> The part played by Sher Khān clearly demonstrated his policy of aggrandizement at the cost of the Bengal Sultanat, rather than his attachment to the cause of Makhdūm 'Ālam. The victory increased Sher Khān's power, and correspondingly the apprehensions of both Maḥmūd Khān and the Luhānīs. They now became natural allies so that when Maḥmūd Shāh sent another army against Makhdūm 'Ālam the Luhānīs employed diplomacy and persuasion to prevent Sher Khān from coming to the latter's help. Thus left alone Makhdūm 'Ālam was defeated and killed in a battle.<sup>2</sup> Before that, however, he had succeeded in transferring his treasures to Sher Khān's envoy. The removal of Makhdūm 'Ālam from the scene brought Maḥmūd Shāh and Sher Khān face to face. In the meantime the relations between the latter and the Luhānīs further deteriorated. Feeling himself completely insecure against the rising power of Sher Khān the Luhānī chief Jalāl Khān now placed himself under Maḥmūd's protection and joined forces with him. Sher Khān immediately advanced well inside the Bihar territory of the Bengal Sultanat where he was opposed at Surajgarh, a few miles to the south of Monghyr, by a large army under Jalāl Khān and Ibrāhīm Khān, son of Qutb Khān. By superior tactics, however, Sher Khān gained a signal victory over the allied forces, killing Ibrāhīm Khān in the battle and putting Jalāl Khān to flight. The victory at Surajgarh in 940/1534 made Sher Khān master of Bihar and shattered the power of his rival kinsmen, the Luhānīs. It also left him free to strike at Bengal proper at his convenience. That he did not immediately do so was because he had to watch Humāyūn's movements in the west.

#### VI: THE PORTUGUESE ACTIVITIES

In the meantime the arrival of the Portuguese on the Bengal

<sup>1</sup> *Tab. II.*, 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Riyād.*, 138.

shores and their activities added to Mahmūd's troubles. They had come to Bengal for the first time during Husain Shāh's reign. From the very beginning they combined their trading operations with piratical activities and territorial aggrandizement. In fact when the first Portuguese agents arrived at Chittagong in 1518 they had on their way pirated and captured two ships, one belonging to a Muslim merchant named Ghulām 'Alī (Goromalle, as the Portuguese called him), and the other, unluckily for them, to the governor of Chittagong himself. The latter therefore rightly took the newcomers as pirates and treated them as such.<sup>1</sup> The next batch of the Portuguese who arrived in 1526 under the leadership of Ruy Vaz Pereira did also the same thing, having captured on their way a vessel belonging to a rich Persian merchant named Khwāja Shihāb al-Dīn (Coge Sabadin).<sup>2</sup> The third arrivals in 1528 under Martim Alfonso de Mello Jusarte had the bad luck of being driven by winds to Chakaria, some fifty miles southward of Chittagong, where they found themselves in trouble with the local chief Khuda Bakhsh Khān (Codovascam) who put them under arrest. They ultimately obtained their release through the intercession of Khwāja Shihāb al-Dīn who, in return for this service, got back his vessel and goods from the Portuguese. In 1533, shortly after Mahmūd's accession to the throne, the Portuguese governor at Goa, Nuna da Cunha, once again sent de Mello Jusarte on a military expedition-cum-diplomatic mission to Bengal with five ships and two hundred men.<sup>3</sup> Although well received by the Chittagong governor, de Mello Jusarte rather marred his prospects by fraudulently smuggling his goods in the town in order to avoid payment of the customs. Even whatever chances he had after this event were destroyed by further crimes which were detected as soon as his representatives reached Gaud. He sent some of his men to Mahmūd's court with some rare presents for the latter. These presents were, however, found to be goods previously plundered from a Muslim merchantman. Neither Jusarte nor his men had taken "the elementary precaution of removing from the offensive

<sup>1</sup> Campos, *op. cit.*, 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> De Barros, quoted by Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1873, 298.

packets the labels of the original owner."<sup>1</sup> The result was that Maḥmūd Shāh had the envoys arrested and confined and also asked the Chittagong governor to arrest de Mello Jusarte and the other Portuguese there. The Chittagong governor did so, but through a questionable method of having first invited the Portuguese to a banquet. Thirty of the Portuguese including de Mello Jusarte were arrested, while ten lost their lives in their attempt to resist and escape. The Portuguese governor at Goa reacted sharply to this event by sending a powerful fleet under Antonio de Silva Menzes against Chittagong. The latter arrived at Chittagong in 1534 at a time when Maḥmūd was busy in confronting Maḥdūm 'Alām of Hajīpūr. Menzes sent an envoy at Gaud demanding the release of the Portuguese prisoners. Before any reply was received, however, and encouraged doubtless by Maḥmūd's preoccupations with the Hājīpur governor, Menzes sacked Chittagong, set the city on fire, and put a large number of its inhabitants to the sword. It was however not this demonstration of naval strength by the Portuguese, but the aggressive designs of Sher Khān, which had been further heightened by his victory at Surajgarh, that decided Maḥmūd's course of action. The latter was now more immediately and pressingly in need of allies and support in his impending confrontation with Sher Khān than to mind the hitherto stary Portuguese depredations on the coastal region. In order therefore to enlist their support, Maḥmūd released the Portuguese prisoners and even employed de Mello Jusarte as one of his military advisers. The Portuguese were also permitted to establish factories at Chittagong and Sātgaon (Hugli).

#### VII: SHER KHĀN OCCUPIES BENGAL: THE END OF THE BENGAL SULTANAT

After the battle of Surajgarh Sher Khān waited for sometime watching the movements of Humāyūn. The latter was soon engaged in hostilities with Bahādur Shāh of Gujarat. Taking advantage of this preoccupation of Humāyūn's Sher Khān marched against Bengal and appeared before the Teligarhi pass in

<sup>1</sup> Whiteway, *The rise of the Portuguese Power in India.*, 232-234, quoted by S. N. Sen in *H. B.* II., 356.

1536. Maḥmūd's army, assisted by the Portuguese, opposed him there. Finding it impossible to pierce the Teliagarhi defences Sher Khān had recourse to a bold strategem. He left his son Jalāl Khān with a detachment to keep the Bengal army engaged at Teliagarhi, while he himself with the main body of his forces entered Bengal through the hilly and forest region lying to the south and suddenly appeared before Maḥmūd Shāh's capital. The surprise of the latter was complete, and before his army hastened back from Teliagarhi, Sher Khān succeeded in forcing him to pay a huge amount of money as price of peace and in withdrawing to Bihar, keeping Teliagarhi at the same time under his control.

Maḥmūd now sought further help from the Portuguese; but they could not or did not send any more immediate help on account of their preoccupations in Gujarat as well. In 1537 Sher Khān again attacked Gaud and, as Maḥmūd refused to pay further indemnity, besieged the capital. At this stage Humāyūn, being at last roused by Sher Khān's aggressive proceedings and increase of power, marched towards the east in order to capture Chunār, Sher Khān's stronghold in Bihar. It appears that as Sher Khān was watching Humāyūn's movements, the latter was naturally doing the same with regard to him. Humāyūn's march towards Chunār was thus a tactical move on his part to capture that stronghold of Sher Khān during his absence in Bengal than really to help and relieve Maḥmūd Shah although, under the circumstances, it had that effect, at least temporarily. Realizing the garvity of Humāyūn's move Sher Khān left his son Jalāl Khān and another general named Khawāṣ Khān to continue the siege of Gaud, and himself hurried to meet Humāyūn at Chunār. The siege at both the places dragged on for months, and when at last Sher Khān found it impossible to hold Chunār against the Mughal pressure he prudently sent another general with sufficient reinforcements to Bengal to force a decision at that front. Chunār fell into Humāyūn's hands; but in Bengal Sher Shāh's move was attended with success. There the long siege exhausted Maḥmūd and his forces who, faced with a shortage of food supplies, at last sallied out and gave battle to the Afghan forces. The battle went against Maḥmūd. Being defeated and wounded he fled with his followers

towards north Bihar. The besiegers entered and captured the capital Gauḍ on 6 Dhu al-Qa'dah 949/6 April 1538. From north Bihar Maḥmūd sent an envoy to Humāyūn, who was at that time halting at Barkunda after having captured Chunār, seeking his help and requesting him to attack the Afghans in Bengal. Humāyūn, knowing full well that the latter were his main enemies, acceded to Maḥmūd's request and joined him at Darweshpur and advanced towards Bengal. When the party reached Kahlgaon, however, Maḥmūd received the terrible news of the execution of his two sons by the Afghans. The shock proved too much for the poor Sultān's exhausted body and mind and he succumbed to it.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the independent Sultānat of Bengal fell a victim to the ambitions of Sher Khān. Yet, strangely enough, some modern writers have found fault with Maḥmūd Shah for what they call his tactlessness and lack of prudence in not recognizing in the Mughals as the ultimate enemy and therefore in not allying himself with Sher Khān and "striking at the Mughal power when Humayun was busy with Bahadur [of Gujarat]."<sup>2</sup> It is further stated that Maḥmūd "overestimated the advantage of an open alliance with the Lohanis whose fickleness and political impotence he failed to notice"; that his first expedition against Makhdum 'Ālam was really aimed at destroying Sher Khān's power and that even after that Maḥmūd's "blind adhesion to the Lohanis prevented him from saving the situation even now by recognizing in Sher a far more powerful ally than the factious Afghans of Patna."<sup>3</sup> Finally, it is also stated that an "early alliance with Sher or Humayun could have delayed the catastrophe of 1538 by a few years more."<sup>4</sup>

These criticisms are as inappropriate as they are inconsistent. The Mughals under Akbar did indeed attack Bengal about forty years after Maḥmūd's death; but neither Bābur nor Humāyūn posed any immediate threat to it. On the contrary Bābur desired

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 141-142.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.* II., 160; and following it *Taraḥdar*, *op. cit.*, 84, 88, 89.

<sup>3</sup> *H.B.*, II., 160.

<sup>4</sup> *Taraḥdar*, *op. cit.*, 89. Cf. *H.B.* II., 162 which writes: For Maḥmūd, "blinded by fury, the

Nusrat Shāh's alliance against the Afghans, while Humāyūn, as indicated above, was busy with Gujarat and did not in fact think of coming to Bengal till requested by Mahmūd himself. As a matter of fact the Mughals were a far more direct and immediate enemy of Sher Khān and it was perhaps his turn to seek allies against them. Yet, being ambitious, clever and capable, he considered himself alone sufficient to deal with his rivals and did not show any inclination for an anti-Mughal coalition in alliance with Bengal or with any one else. His espousal of Makhdūm 'Ālam's cause was dictated, as subsequent events clearly show, not by any humaintarian motive to help a man in distress, nor by any threat to his position by Mahmūd Shāh, but by a desire to aggrandize himself at the latter's cost. It is not at all correct to say that Mahmūd's first expedition against Makhdūm 'Ālam was aimed at destroying Sher Khān's position. Mahmūd was too busy with his own affairs to embark upon any aggressive policy. It was Makhdūm 'Ālam who challenged Mahmūd's accession to the Bengal throne and whose subjugation thus became necessary for Mahmūd. Sher Khān knew full well that Makhdūm 'Ālam was no match for him and therefore by taking up his cause he (Sher Khān) would only strengthen his position in Bihar. There was also no question of Mahmūd's winning over Sher Khān and Makhdūm 'Ālam even after this first expedition. The two were bent upon destroying Mahmūd and nothing short of his complete surrender or abdication would have satisfied these two inexorable opponents of his. Also the suggestion that Mahmūd Shāh would have done well to form an early alliance with Humāyūn, or with Gujarat, is in fact an indirect admission on the critics' part that Sher Khān was the real and immediate enemy of the Bengal Sultanat. Both Humāyūn and Bahādur Shāh of Gujarat were initially themselves too much engaged in a conflict with each other to be able to turn their attention even to Sher Shāh, not to speak of their sending any help to the far-off Bengal Sultān. In fact this part of the criticism reveals its inherent inconsistency. Mahmūd Shāh is castigated for not having joined Sher Khān in forming an anti-Mughal alliance, (although the latter never showed any desire for such an alliance), and then, when Sher



Khān is found destroying Maḥmūd and the Bengal Sultanat, once again Maḥmūd is condemned for not having invoked Humāyūn's assistance earlier. Maḥmūd does not however appear as inconsistent, nor did he lack prudence or grasp of the political situation. Like his father Husain Shāh, and brother Nusrat Shāh, Maḥmūd attempted to steer clear of the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy. His alliance with the Luhānīs was rather forced upon him by Makhdūm 'Ālam's and Sher Khān's hostility, and that too more because of the eagerness of the Luhānīs. Whether the latter were fickle-minded etc. is perhaps irrelevant, for they did not at least prove so in their dealings with Maḥmūd Shāh, nor, it might be added, was Sher Shāh any the better in respect of faithfulness and scrupulousness. The main political issue of the time was the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy, and perhaps Bengal would have in the long run been drawn into that conflict; but the facts as they are clearly show that while Sher Khān, as a part of his overall strategy, chose Bihar and Bengal as the base of his power in the initial stage, Humāyūn chose north and west India for the same purpose and as preparations for the ultimate struggle. It would therefore be a poor appraisal of both Sher Khān and the political situation to suggest that Maḥmūd Shāh could have saved himself by being friendly with him and forming an anti-Mughal coalition, or that Sher Shāh turned hostile to Maḥmūd because of his alliance with the Luhānīs. Sher Khān would not in any case have spared Bihar and Bengal, as he did not, even if Maḥmūd proved submissive, as indeed he did after Sher Khān's first expedition into Bengal by paying him a large amount of treasures and practically surrendering the Teliagarhi pass. If Humāyūn ultimately came to Bengal, it was in the wake of Sher Shāh's occupation of that place after Maḥmūd Shāh's defeat and death.

Though stormy and full of troubles, Maḥmūd Shāh's reign was not devoid of constructive activities. His earliest hitherto discovered inscription has been found at Dhorail, a village in Dinajpur district, which records the construction of a bridge there in the Śaka year 1455, corresponding to 1533 (940 H.), by his minister Farāsh Khān, son of Nūrbāj Khān.<sup>1</sup> The inscription is in

<sup>1</sup> *I.H.Q.*, VII, 1931, 17-18.

Sanskrit, the only such record of a Bengal Sultān. Another inscription of the year 941/1535 records the construction of a *jamī* mosque at Gaud (the Jhanjhanīa Mosque) at the instance of a lady named Bua Mālti or Bibi Mālti.<sup>1</sup> Two other inscriptions, one found at Jowar in Mymensingh district, the other at Gaud (a brick inscription), record the construction of two other mosques respectively in 941/1535 and 943/1536-37.<sup>2</sup> The political trouble and threat to the Sultanat from the west is reflected in an inscription found at Shāhpur near Malda which records the construction in 943/1536-37 of a gate to what is called the "impregnable fort" ( الحصن الحصين ) for "defence and security" ( للحماية والتحصين ) of the realm.<sup>3</sup> Only one record of Maḥmūd Shāh's time found so far in Bihar is an inscription dated 4 Dhu al-Qa'dah 943/14 April 1537 at Purnia recording the construction of a tomb at that place. This is the "last epigraphic evidence of the existence of the rule of a Bengal Sultān over a part of Bihar."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, 93.

<sup>2</sup> *E.I.A.P.S.*, 1955-56, 26-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>4</sup> Q. Ahmad, in *ibid.*, 1968, 15.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE AFGHAN ERA

#### I: GAUD AS COCK-PIT OF THE MUGHAL-AFGHAN CONTEST FOR SUPREMACY

Sher Khān entered Gaud on 6 Dhu al-Qa'dah 944/6 April 1538 and immediately proclaimed his sovereignty there by issuing coins in his name.<sup>1</sup> His position was however far from secure, as the Mughals were sure to advance against him into Bengal. Accordingly, without much loss of time, he sent his son Jalāl Khān along with the able general Khawāṣ Khān to hold the strategic Teliagarhi pass and oppose Humāyūn's march upon Bengal. The latter proceeded from Colgong (in Bhagalpur district, Bihar) and sent an advance party under Jahāngīr Beg which was repulsed by Jalāl Khān at Teliagarhi.<sup>2</sup> When Humāyūn himself came up with the main Mughal force, however, "Jalāl Khān and Khawāṣ Khān, seeing their inability to stand the emperor's onslaught, fled toward the hills, and from thence to Sher Khān at Gaur."<sup>3</sup> The latter also was not prepared to confront the Mughal army in an open contest. Hence as Humāyūn approached Gaud, Sher Khān plundered and burnt the city and then lading a large number of horses, mules and elephants with vast treasures including "60 millions in gold"<sup>4</sup> made a hasty retreat through south-western Bengal (Rādh) and Chutia Nagpur (Jhārkhand) towards Bihar. Humāyūn entered the pillaged and deserted capital of Bengal unopposed in 945/1538 and immediately took steps to bring it back to life and activity. He had the debris cleared and the roads and buildings repaired, and then settled himself in the city. Even after its sack by Sher Khān, the wealth of Gaud and its green natural environment so impressed the emperor that he renamed it *Jannatābād* (the abode of gardens) instead of Gaud which in Persian sounded like *gor* meaning grave.<sup>5</sup> Next he

<sup>1</sup> Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab*, I., 344, 349; *Islamic Culture*, 1936, 127-130.

<sup>2</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 141.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Campos, *op-cit.*, 60.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Campos, *op-cit.*, 60.

<sup>5</sup> Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab*, I., 349.

brought the whole countryside including the ports of Sunārgāon and Chittagong under his jurisdiction and placed suitable officers and garrisons at different places and strategic points.

While Humāyūn was thus engaged in the work of reconstruction in Bengal, Sher Khān occupied south Bihar and its strong Rohtas fort by a not very creditable strategem. He induced the Rājā of the place to give shelter to the families of the fleeing Afghans, and under this pretext sent two thousand armed Afghans in palanquins inside the fort. These Afghans killed the Rājā and his soldiers and captured it.<sup>1</sup> Sher Khān himself moved to Monghyr and massacred the Mughal nobles posted there. Thus establishing himself in south Bihar Sher Khān blocked Humāyūn's lines of communications with northern India and also began to harass him by sending in flying columns of Afghan cavalry well inside Bengal. To add to Humāyūn's trouble the rains and humidity of Bengal started taking a heavy toll on his soldiery and equiPAGE. "Three months had not yet passed, since his stay in that city, when owing to the badness of the climate of that place, many horses and camels died, and many soldiers fell ill."<sup>2</sup> At the same time Humāyūn received the disquieting news of the rebellion of his brother, Mirzā Hindal, at Agra. This obliged Humāyūn to decide on an immediate march towards Agra. Hence, leaving Jahāngīr Qulī Beg with a select band of five thousand cavalry to hold Bengal, he hurriedly started for Agra. Sher Khān was only waiting for such an opportunity. As Humāyūn entered Bihar, Sher Khān began to harass him by constant flank attacks from the rear. Humāyūn was at last forced to turn round and halt at Chausa, on the east bank of the Karmanāsā, four miles west of Buxar. Sher Khān also pitched tent at a distance of two miles on the eastern bank of a rivulet called Thoranadī. For about three months the two armies remained encamped face to face. At last Sher Khān devised a strategem. He feigned fidelity and through Shaikh Khalīl, a learned man commanding respect in both the camps, opened negotiations

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Riyāḍ.*, 142.

proposing that if he (Sher Khān) were only permitted to hold Bengal he would relinquish all his other possessions. Owing to the exigencies of the times, particularly in view of the enmity of his brother, Humāyūn accepted Sher Khān's overtures. It was agreed that Bengal and southern Bihar including the Rohtas fort would remain under the latter's possession, "but that the Imperial coin and the *Khutba* would be in force in those provinces." Sher Khān, "taking his oath on the *Qoran*", ratified the treaty.<sup>1</sup> An atmosphere of relaxation and cordiality now prevailed in the Mughal camp. Thus throwing his enemies out of their guard Sher Khān at first faked a march against a Chero chief of the Shahabad district, but at night turned round and early in the morning of 9 Šafar 946/26 June 1539 suddenly fell upon the unsuspecting Mughal camp. Most of the Mughal soldiers were either asleep or busy in performing their morning duties, while Humāyūn himself was engaged in his ablutions for the morning prayer.<sup>2</sup> Their surprise was complete and they found little time to gather in regular formation. Before the organized charge of the Afghans under Sher Khān the Mughal army were totally scattered and in their attempt to escape across the river a large number of them were drowned. Humāyūn himself narrowly escaped with the help of an inflated bag of a water carrier named Nizām, and with the remnant of the army proceeded towards Agra.

Thus having routed Humāyūn at Chausa, Sher Khān hurried to Bengal and defeated Jahāngīr Qulī, the Mughal governor, in a series of engagements. The latter relinquished the capital Gaud and withdrew into the interior of the country. Sher Khān induced him, however, to come to a private interview and then treacherously slew him and his retinue.<sup>3</sup> The scattered Mughal garrisons in Bengal were then haunted down and put to the sword. Sher Khān next brought the different parts of the country under his domination, had the *khutba* read in his name, and assumed the royal title of Farīd al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Sher Shāh.<sup>4</sup> The eastern tracts of the country, particularly Chittagong

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 144; Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab*, I, 351; Campos, *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abbās, in Elliot, IV, 375; Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab*, I, 351.

<sup>3</sup> *A.N.* (text), 160; *Riyād.*, 144.

<sup>4</sup> Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab.*, I, 352.

and its vicinity continued for sometime to hold out under Khuda Bakhsh Khān and Amirza Khān, who had been officers under the last Ḥusainī ruler Mahmūd Shāh and who now appear to have received some support from the Portuguese authorities there. Similarly the region comprising Mymensingh and Sylhet was under the control of one Bārbak Shāh, son of one Humāyūn Shāh, a few of whose coins have come to light.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime Humāyūn reorganized his army and marched from Agra towards the east. Sher Shāh was prepared for the inevitable contest and advanced from Bengal to meet the Mughals. The two armies encamped at Bilgram, near Kanauij. Unluckily for Humāyūn the rains began rather early that year and flooded the Mughal camps pitched on a low ground. On 10 Muharram 947/17 May 1540 when the Mughals were in the process of transferring their camps to a new site, Sher Shāh made a determined charge with his cavalry. As at Chausa, at Bilgram also the Mughals were taken in a state of unpreparedness with the same result. They ran helter-skelter without being able to offer any effective resistance. Humāyūn crossed the Ganges with difficulty and with a small band of followers fled towards Agra. The battle of Bilgram decided for the time being the Mughal-Afghan contest for mastery over north India and transferred its crown to the Afghan hero Sher Shāh. After this great victory he moved to Delhi, having appointed Khizr Khān governor of Bengal. The latter, however, married the last Ḥusainī ruler Mahmūd Shāh's daughter and began to act like an independent king. On coming to know this Sher Shāh marched to Gaud in 948/1451 whereupon Khizr submitted but was imprisoned. In order to provide against the possibility of any future governor assuming such an attitude of disloyalty Sher Shāh made a new administrative arrangement in the province. He divided it into a number of smaller units called *Sarkārs* over each of which he placed an Afghan *Amīr* directly responsible to him. For coordinating and supervising their work one Qādī Faḍīlat, "who was one of the learned scholars of Agra, and who was distinguished for his virtues, honesty and trustworthiness", was placed over them. He

<sup>1</sup> H.B. II, 174.

was, however, "vested with very little military power. His function was to communicate imperial orders to the District officers and to see that the District officers obeyed the imperial orders and did not fight amongst themselves."<sup>1</sup> This arrangement, though intended to stamp out rebellion on the part of the provincial governor, resulted only in letting loose a centrifugal force which Sher Shāh's own successors as also the Mughals found hard to contend with.

Sher Shāh had a very short reign of five years, from 947—952/1540—1545, having died in the latter year of an explosion in course of his attempt to capture the fort of Kalinjar (Banda district, U.P.). As an emperor of Delhi he exhibited wonderful resourcefulness and introduced a number of revenue and military reforms, some of which the Mughals, who ruled after him, found it convenient to incorporate in their own system. So far as Bengal is concerned, however, his reforms would have had only a very short period of application, if at all, and of that also we have no information except that his projected Grand Trunk Road was to extend from Sunārgāon to Delhi.<sup>2</sup>

The empire which Sher Shāh had built up by a combination of heroism and treachery did not long survive his death. His son Jalāl Khān ascended the throne of Delhi and assumed the title of Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Islām Shāh. He was popularly known as Salīm Shāh, and had a reign of eight years, from 952 to 960/1545 to 1553. Islām Shāh reversed his father's arrangements in Bengal, removed Qādī Fadīlat from his post, and placed a relative named Muhammad Khān Sūr as the sole governor of Bengal. At the same time Bihar was placed under another governor named Sulaimān Karrānī. Muhammad Khān Sūr governed Bengal throughout Islām Shāh's reign. Very little is known about Muhammad Khān Sūr's activities in Bengal. On the other hand it appears that the south-eastern, eastern and north-eastern districts of Bengal were in a state of turmoil. In the south-east, the region

<sup>1</sup> N.K. Bhattasali, in *B.P.P.*, 1928, 136.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed discussion about Sher Shah's career and achievement may be found in K.R. Qanungo, *Sher Shah*, Calcutta, 1921, although Qanungo has in the main elaborated the lines of thought indicated by Badāyūnī (*Muntakhab*, I., 356-54) and, to some extent, by Abdus Salam, translator of the *Riyād* (143 n 2, 146, n.).



embracing Chittagong and Noakhali districts, the Maghs (Ara-kanese) and the Portuguese were alternately carrying on their depredations. In the north Kuch Bihar, which had been conquered by 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh, rose into a position of semi-independence under one Bisa in 944/1539 during Sher Shāh's conflict with Humāyūn. It openly asserted its independence under Rājā Nara Nārāyan in 962/1547 during Muḥammad Khān Sūr's viceroyalty. In the east an independent principality comprising the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh was carved out by Sulaimān Khān, the progenitor of the house of 'Īsā Khān. Sulaimān's independence in eastern Bengal was viewed with concern by Salīm Shāh who sent two of his best generals, Tāj Khān and Daryā Khān, against Sulaimān who was forced, after a hard fighting, to submit. As soon as Tāj Khān and Daryā Khān withdrew, however, Sulaimān again asserted independence. Once again Tāj Khān and Daryā Khān marched to eastern Bengal and defeated and killed Sulaimān Khān in a battle. He had two sons, 'Īsā and Ismā'il, and a daughter who subsequently became known as Shāhinshāh Bibī. 'Īsā Khān rose to be leader of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* of eastern Bengal and proved to be a determined opponent of Mughal expansion in that region.

## II: THE INTERVAL OF INDEPENDENT AFGHAN RULE

Islām Shāh died at Delhi in 960/1533<sup>1</sup> and was succeeded by his minor son Firūz Khān. After only a few days, however, he was assassinated by Sher Shāh's nephew Mubārīz Khān (son of Nizām Khān) who then ascended the Delhi throne under the title of Muḥammad Shāh 'Ādil, popularly known as 'Adlī. Thereupon Muḥammad Khan Sūr in Bengal refused to pay him homage, viewing him as the assassin of his late master's son, declared

<sup>1</sup> Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1875, 297-298. Blochmann writes: "I have followed Mr. Thomas in referring Islam Shah's death to the year 960, inspite of the almost unanimous assertion of the historians that he died a year later on 26th Zil Hījjah, 961, or 21st November 1554. But Islam Shah's coinage goes, in an uninterrupted series, only as far as 960. Suppose Islam Shah had died on 26th Zil Hījjah, 961. He was succeeded by his son Firuz Shah, who after three days, - one source says after several months - was murdered by Mubārīz Khan 'Adlī, i.e., on 29th Zil Hījjah, so that 'Adlī could only have celebrated his *julūs* in Muharram, 962. His coinage, however, gives 961; and further, 'Adlī reigned for some time, when Humayun, in Zil Hījjah, 961, entered India, and people said that if Islam Shah had been alive, he would have opposed the Mughals. Islam Shah, therefore, must have died in 960; the day of the month (26th Zil Hījjah) is very likely correct."

independence and assumed the royal title of Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar Muḥammad Shāh. The most important event of his rule was an expedition led by him against Arakan, most probably to check the Magh intrusion in the east. In 962/1555 he advanced towards northern India and conquered Chunar, Jaunpur and Kalpi, when his further progress was checked by 'Adlī's general Himu who defeated and killed him at the battle of Chapparghata, some 30 miles east of Kalpi on the river Jumna.<sup>1</sup> Shāh 'Adlī then appointed Shāhbāz Khān as the governor of Bengal.

The defeated nobles and officers of the late Bengal ruler Muḥammad Shāh assembled however at Joshi on the left bank of the Ganges opposite to Allahabad and crowned his son Khizr Khān as the Sultān of Bengal. The latter assumed the title of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur Shāh. He proved to be a capable and successful ruler who duly avenged his father's death, though, in doing so, he rather hastened the process of the Afghans' discomfiture vis-a-vis the Mughals. Immediately after his coronation at Joshi Bahādur Shāh gathered his forces and marched against 'Adlī's governor Shāhbāz Khān in Bengal. Many of the latter's grandees, "seeing the overwhelming force of Bahādur Shāh, deserted to the latter."<sup>2</sup> Shāhbāz Khān was defeated and slain in the battle field. Bahādur Shāh captured the city of Gaud and issued coins and had the *khutba* read in his name. He also wisely left Sulaimān Karrānī in peaceful possession of south Bihar and thus turned him into an ally.

In the meantime the fugitive Mughal emperor Humāyūn had reappeared on the Indian scene; but after having recaptured the Panjab and Delhi from the Sūrs he died early in 963 whereupon his minor son Akbar was crowned by the Mughal nobles as the emperor of Delhi. Shortly afterwards Akbar's general Bairām Khān finally defeated the Sūr army under Himu in the famous second battle of Panipat, 963 (26 January 1556). Himu was killed in the battle. Driven out of Agra 'Adlī now retreated towards the east. This gave Bahādur Shāh the opportunity to avenge his father's death. He marched out against 'Adlī, and assisted by

<sup>1</sup> Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab*, I., 432; *Tab. Ak.*, II, 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 148.

Sulaimān Karrānī of south Bihar, defeated and killed him in the battle of Surajgarh (Monghyr district) in 964/1557.<sup>1</sup> Bahādur's next move to conquer Jaunpur was checked by the Mughal general Khān-i-Zamān, then posted in Oudh. This first encounter with the Mughal forces gave Bahādur an idea of their superior strength and thenceforth he maintained friendly relations with the Mughal viceroy in Oudh.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Bahādur Shāh ruled for six years, from 962 to 968/1555 to 1560 and passed the later years of his reign in peace. During his time at least one *Jāmi'* mosque was built at Rajmahal,<sup>2</sup> and two other mosques, one at Kusumba in the Rajshahi district, and another at Kalnā in Burdwan district. He was succeeded by his brother Jalāl al-Dīn, who assumed the title of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaffar Jalāl Shāh.<sup>3</sup> He ruled for only three years, from 968 to 971 (1560—1563) during which he wisely followed his brother's policy of maintaining good relations with the Mughals. In fact the Mughal emperor Akbar's early age and other preoccupations gave the Afghan rule in Bengal a short lease of life during which their inherent weakness and internal strife appeared increasingly on the surface. Jalāl Shāh is reported to have been succeeded by his son whose name, however, is not on record. He ruled for only "seven months and nine days" when an usurper killed him and captured the throne, calling himself also Ghiyāth al-Dīn.<sup>4</sup> At this Sulaimān Karrānī, the governor of south Bihar, sent an army under his brother Tāj Khān Karrānī who killed the usurper and established himself at Gaud.

With this event the Karrānī Afghan rule was established in Bengal; and once again Bengal and Bihar were united under one administration. The Karrānīs had been gathering strength in south and south-eastern Bihar since Sulaimān Karrānī's appointment as

<sup>1</sup> Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab*, I., 433-434.

<sup>2</sup> See the inscription from the *Jāmi'* mosque at Rajmahal, dated 964/1557, *J.A.S.B.*, 1875, 301-302. Blochmann, who first noticed the inscription, thought that though the inscription belongs to Bahādur Shāh's reign, it has no connection with the mosque.

<sup>3</sup> This title is known from an inscription found at Sherpur, Bogra, (*J.A.S.B.*, 1875, 298-299), dated 960/1553. As this date falls in the reign of his father Muhammad Khān Sūr, Blochmann suggested that Jalāl al-Dīn rebelled against his father. This suggestion is based purely on the use of the title of *Sultān* used in respect of Jalāl Shāh in the inscription, and has no other corroboration.

<sup>4</sup> *Riyād.*, 149.

governor in that region. His elder brother Tāj Khān Karrānī was an important noble under Sher Shāh and was governor of Sambhal (Moradabad district, U.P.) under Salīm Shāh. When 'Adlī ascended the throne in 960/1553 Tāj Khān refused to acknowledge him and proceeded towards the east. 'Adlī sent against him an army who intercepted him at Chaprampur near Kanauj and defeated him in an engagement. He then retired towards Chunar. On the way he won over "certain Revenue Collectors of the Crown-lands" of 'Adlī and "levied from them in the shape of cash and goods whatever he could, and taking one *halqah* of elephants — a *halqah* consisting of 100 elephants — from the parganahs, united with his brothers, Ahmad Khān and Ilyās Khān", who were holding some lands on the banks of the Ganges near Khawaspur and Tandah.<sup>1</sup> 'Adlī sent another large army under his general Himu in 961/1554 to crush the Karrānīs. Himu succeeded in inflicting a defeat on them, but the rebellion of 'Adlī's brother-in-law, Ibrāhīm Khān Sūr, at Delhi compelled the former to recall Himu. The Karrānīs were thus left free to consolidate their position in Bihar.

Shortly after having captured Gaud Tāj Khān Karrānī died in the same year (971/1563). Sulaimān Karrānī then directly took over the administration of Bengal along with Bihar. He ruled from 971 to 980 (1563—1572) during which period Bengal had once again a brief spell of power and progress. This was due mainly to a number of special circumstances. In the first place, the Mughal emperor Akbar was at that time busy in consolidating his position in north-western and central India so that he could not turn any serious attention to Bengal and Bihar. Secondly, as the Mughal authority was established in northern India, most of the Afghan chiefs and nobles now came to Bengal and Bihar and gathered round their fellow clansmen there. With their help Sulaimān was able to build up a very strong army. Thirdly, he himself was capable and intelligent, particularly in continuing his predecessor's policy of placating the Mughal emperor. An opportunity to do so specially presented itself almost immediately after his accession. In 972/1564 'Alī Qūlī Khān, Khān-i-Zamān,

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, 150-151

Akbar's governor in the east, rose in rebellion. Akbar was naturally anxious to see that the Khān-i-Zamān did not receive any support from the Afghans. Accordingly he sent one Ḥājī Muḥammad Sīstān to Sulaimān asking him not to give any aid to the rebel governor.<sup>1</sup> Akbar's envoy was, however, intercepted by Khān-i-Zamān's men,<sup>2</sup> but Sulaimān, on his own account, refrained from rendering any help to the Khān-i-Zamān. Further, when Sulaimān heard that the Mughals intended to take possession of the Rohtas fort in Bihar, he withdrew from the place, although he had already at that time commenced its siege.<sup>3</sup> Shortly afterwards he sent his principal noble and officer, Khān Jahān Lūdī, to hold a conference with Akbar's general Mun'im Khān, Khān-i-Khānān, in the neighbourhood of Patna, where it was arranged that the *khutba* would be recited and coins struck in Bengal in Akbar's name.<sup>4</sup> Sulaimān adhered scrupulously to this arrangement. It is also stated that he did not assume the title of Sultān, nor did he sit on the throne, but simply styled himself Ḥadrat-i-'Alā.<sup>5</sup>

Thus remaining satisfied with the substance of power, rather than its name, Sulaimān in effect exercised independent authority over the territory under his jurisdiction. His most outstanding achievement was the conquest and annexation of Orissa in 975/1567-68. Ever since Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh's victorious campaign into Orissa its military strength had been seriously shaken. Subsequently the country had been further plagued by internal dissensions, baronial revolts and palace murders. In 965/1557 its ruler Chakra-Pratāp-Deva was poisoned to death by his son Narsingh Jena who, in turn, was shortly afterwards assassinated at the instance of the ambitious minister Mukund-Dev. For a time the latter ruled in the name of a younger son of Chakra-Pratāp-Deva, but after three years Mukund-Dev openly assumed the crown. It was his unwise policy which proved to be the immediate cause of Sulaimān's expedition into

<sup>1</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II., 299.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Khān-i-Zamān hastened to submit and ask for Akbar's pardon, which was granted.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 302-303.

<sup>4</sup> *Āin*, (tr. Blochmann), 427; *Badāyūnī*, *Muntakhab*, II, 174.

<sup>5</sup> *Badāyūnī*, *Muntakhab*, II, 163.

Orissa. About that time Ibrāhīm Khān Sūr, the late Sūr Sultān 'Adlī's brother-in-law and rival, had taken shelter in Orissa. Mukund-Dev now attempted to use him against Sulaimān Karrānī. Thus, through an emissary of Akbar's, Mukund-Dev professed his loyalty to the Mughal throne and proposed to send Ibrāhīm Khān on an invasion of Bengal on the ground of Sulaimān Karrānī's alleged hostile attitude to Akbar.<sup>1</sup> Little did the Orissa ruler know that Sulaimān Karrānī had already established friendly relations with the Mughal authorities. Sulaimān Karrānī was also vigilant about Ibrāhīm Khān's movement and was not, perhaps, quite in the dark about Mukund-Dev's manoeuvres. Hence in 975/1567-68 Sulaimān sent an expedition into Orissa under the command of his son Bāyazīd, assisted by a valiant general named Kālāpāhār alias Rāju, a Brahman convert to Islam. As the Muslim army advanced into the interior of Orissa, the dissensions among its ruling ranks manifested themselves openly. Mukund-Dev did not dare confront the Muslim army. Hence he sent two of his officers, Chhota Rāi and Raghubhanja, to oppose the Muslim forces. These two officers were however at heart dissatisfied with Mukund-Dev's usurpation. They now seduced the army and turned against him. In this plight Mukund-Dev fell back on the support of the Afghans. He "bought the aid of a Pathan contingent from Bayazid"<sup>2</sup> and then faced the rebellious army. In the battle that followed both Mukund-Dev and Chhota Rāi were killed. The throne was then usurped by another Orissan general called Rāmchandra Bhanja or Dūrgā Bhanja. In the meantime Sulaimān Karrānī himself advanced into Orissa and easily overcame the Orissa forces and captured its capital, Tājpūr, as also the usurper who was put to death. Ibrāhīm Khān was also induced to surrender and was then "treacherously put to death."<sup>3</sup> Next Kālāpāhār led a contingent as far as Puri and subjugated the countryside. The temple of Jagannāth, "which was famous for the wealth accumulated in it," is stated to have been ransacked by Kālāpāhār. How far this

<sup>1</sup> See *H.B.* II., 183. The popular tradition that the Orissa ruler had advanced upro Hugli (Sātgaon) is not corroborated by any positive evidence.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II., 206.

tradition is correct is difficult to say; but the statement made in this connection that he dismantled the temple itself is definitely belied by its continued existence in tact throughout the succeeding periods. Be that as it may, Sulaimān Karrānī annexed Orissa and appointed over it a "permanent Governor with a large army."<sup>1</sup>

While Sulaimān was busy in his Orissa expedition the Kuch Bihar chief Nara-Nārāyan, who had asserted independence during the time of Muhammad Khān Sūr, intruded into the north-western districts of Bengal. Immediately on his return from Orissa, therefore, Sulaimān Karrānī led an expedition against Kuch Bihar. The Kuch army under Nara-Nārāyan's son Sukladhwaja was totally routed, he himself being taken prisoner. Sulaimān then subjugated the environs and outlying parts of Kuch Bihar and laid siege to its capital. As in the case with the Orissa expedition, tradition points to Kālāpāhār as the leader of a contingent of the Muslim army in this expedition too, engaged in "demolishing the temples at Kāmākhyā, Hājo and other places."<sup>2</sup> The doubtful nature of this tradition is evident from the fact that the last named place lies about 125 miles to the east of the Kuch capital, and it is extremely unlikely that Kālāpāhār would have advanced that far into the interior of Assam while Sulaimān Karrānī himself had been still engaged in besieging the Kuch capital. Most probably later Hindu traditions have been particularly bitter against Kālāpāhār because of his being a "Brahman renegade".

Sulaimān Karrānī was obliged to abandon the siege of the Kuch capital because of an insurrection in the newly conquered Orissa. The particulars about this rising and Sulaimān's second expedition into Orissa are not known. That the territory continued to be under the Karrānīs till its annexation by the Mughals is clear enough. It was from Orissa, as will be related shortly, that Dā'ūd, Sulaimān's son, made his last stand against the Mughals.

Sulaimān's achievements in peace were no less important. In 972/1564, the second year of his rule, he removed the capital from

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, 152.

<sup>2</sup> E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta and Simla, 1926, p. 54.

Gaud, "owing to the inclemency of its climate", and built a new capital town at Tanda, on the west side of the Ganges, nearly opposite to Gaud. The transfer of the capital might also have been suggested by the need to exercise effective control over Sulaimān's original territory of south Bihar and, perhaps, also as a preparatory step for the conquest and annexation of Orissa. At any rate the new capital was situated almost at the mid-point of his territory which extended from Kuch Bihar on the north to Puri in Orissa in the south, and from the river Son in the west to at least the Bahmaputra in the east. This extent of his dominion is clearly shown by two of his inscriptions discovered at two extreme ends, Sunārgāon and Bihar. The Sunārgāon inscription is dated Dhu al-Qa'dah 976/April 1569 and records the construction of a number of mosques and other buildings in that locality by the "victorious Malīk 'Abdullah Miyān, son of Amīr Khān Faqīr Miyān".<sup>1</sup> The epithet "victorious" added to the name of Malīk 'Abd Allah together with the mention of a number of mosques and other buildings tend to suggest that the officer established Sulaimān's authority there probably after having overcome some local opposition by rival Afghan groups and that at any rate there was by then a sizeable Afghan settlement there. The Bihar inscription is dated 977/1569-70, and commemorates the construction of a door to the tomb of Shaikh Sharaf al-Dīn in the town of Bihar.<sup>2</sup> The inscription sheds valuable side-lights on Sulaimān's character and administration, confirming similar information in the contemporary chronicles. In this inscription Sulaimān is described as having "established the law of Muṣṭafa" (*Shari'at*) wherever he "raised his exalted standards", that he was "a second Sulaimān...in the perfection of his justice and bounty", and that due to his "terror oppression and heresy disappeared." This is substantially corroborated by the Mughal historians who further state that it was his practice to hold a meeting every morning with 150 *shaikhs* and '*ulamā*' after which he used to transact business during fixed hours.<sup>3</sup> He "was very energetic,

<sup>1</sup> J.A.S.B., 1875, 303.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 303-304.

<sup>3</sup> *Āin*, 17; *Badāyūnī*, *Muntakhab*, II., 76, 173, 174 and 200. See also Abdus Salam's note in *Riyād*, 151 n. 3.



industrious and strict" in his administration.<sup>1</sup>

Sulaimān died in 980/1573 and was succeeded by his son Bāyazīd Shāh. All the Mughal historians depict him as a bad character. This is understandable; for he threw off his allegiance to the Mughal crown, assumed independence and, as recorded by one historian, "in his youthful folly, read the *Khutba* in his own name, and neglected all the forms of politeness which his father had always strictly observed."<sup>2</sup> He had, however, a very short reign<sup>3</sup> when an Afghān named Hansu, who was his cousin and brother-in-law, hatched a conspiracy against him, killed him and seized power. This was, however, opposed by Lūdī Khān, Sulaimān's principal and trusted noble, who organized the other nobles against Hansu, had him arrested and killed, and then installed Bāyazīd's younger brother Dā'ūd on the throne.<sup>4</sup> This fact incidentally shows that the principal nobles led by Lūdī Khān had not really gone against Bāyazīd; and hence the statement made by a writer that the latter had "quickly estranged the proud self-willed Afghān nobles by his violence, harshness and extorions"<sup>5</sup> has to be taken with caution.

### III: DĀ'ŪD KHĀN KARRĀNĪ AND WAR WITH THE MUGHALS

Dā'ūd continued his brother's policy of independence. He was doubtless emboldened to do so in view of the vast resources and military strength which his father Sulaimān had built up. It is stated that Dā'ūd had, on his accession, "40,000 well-mounted cavalry, and 3,300 elephants, and 140,000 infantry, consisting of musketeers, matchlockmen and rocketeers and archers, and 20,000 pieces of ordnance, most of which were battering guns,

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 153. Jadunath Sarkar's remark (*H.B.* II., 185) that the *Riyād*, "by a characteristic mistake, has transferred Bayazid's low character to the wise and pious Sultan [Sulaiman]" is completely baseless. Nowhere does the *Riyād* ascribe a low character to Sulaimān Karrānī. All that it writes is as follows: "...though Sulaiman Khan continued the *Khutba* and the coin after his own name in the kingdom of Bengal, he styled himself Hazrat 'Ala, and outwardly showing submission to Jalāl-uddin Muhammad Akbar Badshah, he sent occasionally presents and gifts". (p. 153). The *Riyād*'s statement about the *Khutba* and the coin is not quite correct; but there is no aspersion on Sulaimān's character. Nor was Bāyazīd a low character, as the Mughal historians, and following them Sarkar, suggest.

<sup>2</sup> *Sawānīh-i-Akbarī*, quoted in *J.A.S.B.*, 1875, 304; See also *Tab. Ak.*, II., 430.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād*, 153.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 154. *Akbarnāma* (tr. Beveridge), III, 97.

<sup>5</sup> *H.B.* II., 185.

and many armed-cruisers, and other implements of war, which he had ready in store."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the open assumption of independence came at a bad time, for although it is doubtful whether the Mughal emperor would have in any case left Bengal alone for long, Akbar was just at that time free, having accomplished the conquest of Gujarat, to turn his attention towards the east. Moreover Dā'ūd's position was weakened by the dissension among the Afghan nobles which had come to the surface since Hansu's attempted usurpation of power. Dā'ūd failed to unite the differing groups and was, in consequence, forced to fall back on the support of one group to the inevitable estrangement of the other. The unfortunate aspect of this internal dissension was that Dā'ūd found himself before long opposed to Lūdī Khān who had, as mentioned above, initially supported his cause. The difference between the two seems to have developed as much on personal grounds as on matters of policy. The contemporary authorities are not quite clear and tend to be confusing on this point. It is said that Lūdī Khān turned hostile because Dā'ūd killed his son-in-law and that therefore Lūdī went to the Rohtas fort in Bihar where he declared independence.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand it is stated by another authority that immediately on Dā'ūd's accession Gujar Khān, who was commander of the Afghan forces in Bihar, set up Bāyazīd's son as king and that Dā'ūd sent Lūdī Khān with a large army to suppress the pretender. Whatever the matter, both Gujar Khān and Lūdī Khān were in Bihar with a considerable body of the Afghan forces when Akbar's general Mun'im Khān (Khān-i-Khānān) advanced towards Bihar in course of his first expedition against Dā'ūd.

The immediate cause of the expedition, according to the Mughal historians, was Dā'ūd's assumption of independence and his destruction of the Mughal fort of Zamāniā on the Jaunpur frontier.<sup>3</sup> It was not Dā'ūd, but his predecessor Bāyazīd who had in fact assumed an attitude of independence. The conflict was, as

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, 154-155. This information has some support in the *Tab. Ak.*, II., 445 where it is stated that Dā'ūd had 20,000 cavalry under him in the Patna fort alone when he fled from that place being pressed hard by Akbar. See also *infra*, p.252.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II., 430-431.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 430.

indicated above, inevitable. It was only delayed by Akbar's other preoccupations on the one hand, and Sulaimān Karrānī's powerful position and diplomacy on the other. The news of his death reached Akbar when he had already started on his Gujarat campaign. Most of his officers then suggested that the Gujarat expedition could be postponed and that the eastern provinces of Bihar and Bengal should immediately be subjugated. "As the God-worshipping Khedive reflected that the oppressed ones of Gujarat should be brought into the cradle of grace", writes Abū al-Faḍl,<sup>1</sup>

"he did not give ear to these futilities and said with his holy lips that it was good that the news of Sulaimān's death had come during the march to Guzarat, for had it come while he was in the Capital, assuredly he would, out of deference to the opinions of most of his officers, have addressed himself in the first place to an expedition to the Eastern provinces. What necessity was there for the Shāhin Shāh's personal visit to these countries after Sulaimān's death? Now the conquest of that country would be accomplished by the skill and courage of the officers. Accordingly an order was sent to Mun'im Khān, Khān-Khānān, that he should conquer Bihar, Bengal and Orissa in concurrence with the other officers."

Thus the expedition against Bengal was ordered immediately on receipt of the news of Sulaimān Karrānī's death and not because of Dā'ūd's alleged destruction of the Zamānia fort. Akbar himself would have led the expedition had he not already embarked on his march against Gujarat.

Acting under Akbar's specific instructions Mun'im Khān proceeded with a large army and a flotilla of war-boats towards Patna at the end of 980/ early 1574. As soon as he arrived in the neighbourhood of Patna Lūdī Khān, along with Gujar Khān faced him and after some time opened negotiations for peace. "He brought to the recollection of the Khān Khānān", writes Nizām al-Dīn, "the ancient friendship and affection which he had for Sulaimān, agreed to pay tribute of two lakhs of rupees in cash and one lakh in staffs and induced the imperial troops to turn back."<sup>2</sup> Lūdī then sent Jalāl Khān Karorī to explain the terms of the peace to Dā'ūd. The latter, however, did not approve of the move. In fact it was at this stage that the difference between Lūdī and Dā'ūd

<sup>1</sup> *Akbarnāma* (tr. Beveridge), III., 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II, 431.

came to the surface. Dā'ūd came to believe, on the advice of Qutlū Khān, his governor of Orissa, and one "Hindu Bengali named Śrīdhar", that Lūdī was secretly in league with the Mughals.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly Dā'ūd marched out to Bihar, had Lūdī Khān arrested and put to death at the instance of Qutlū Khān and Śrīdhar (also referred to as Śrīhari). Both these latter two persons apparently acted out of malice towards Lūdī by whose removal from the scene they intended to occupy the position of premier advisers of Dā'ūd. The latter also definitely acted foolishly in the matter. But considering the tenacity with which Dā'ūd, Qutlu Khān and Gujar Khān subsequently fought against the Mughals, it appears that in addition to personal jealousies, there were deep questions of policies involved in the quarrel. Lūdī Khān, in consonance with his role during Sulaimān Karrānī's rule, perhaps stood for a policy of moderation and subordinate alliance with the Mughals, while Dā'ūd and his Orissa governor appear to have favoured a policy of independence and confrontation. At any rate, Lūdī Khān is praised by Abū al-Faḍl as "the rational spirit of the Country",<sup>2</sup> - an appreciation which must have had some reference to the former's attitude to the Mughals. Śrīdhar, on the other hand, appears to have been actuated by personal motives alone. Unlike Qutlū Khān and Gujar Khān, he did not fight the Mughals and made away with Dā'ūd's riches at the first onset of his misfortunes.

When the news of Lūdī's death and Dā'ūd's rejection of the peace terms reached Mun'im Khān, he retraced his steps and once again advanced upon Patna. Dā'ūd Khān, with his forces, entrenched himself at Patna ready to oppose the Mughals. Mun'im Khān laid siege to the fort of Patna but could not make much headway in the face of determined resistance by Dā'ūd. In the meantime Akbar, on receipt of a report about the state of affairs, resolved to come personally to the aid of Mun'im Khān. With a vast army and a large flotilla of war-boats, together with a huge number of elephants, Akbar arrived in the vicinity of Patna

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 432. The *Riyāḍ* seems to reflect this opinion when it writes (p. 156) that Lūdī Khān, being displeased with Dā'ūd, opened communications with Mun'im Khān.

<sup>2</sup> *Akbarnāma* III, 28.

on 16 Rabī' II 981/3 August 1574. He realized that the fort of Patna drew its support and supplies from the subsidiary fort of Hājipur on the north bank of the Ganges facing Patna. Therefore on 18 Rabī' II/5 August he attacked Hājipur and after overcoming the naval forces of Dā'ūd in an engagement on the river, captured and burnt Hājipur on the same day. After that Akbar took steps to invest the Patna fort. The fall of Hājipur in fact broke the backbone of Dā'ūd's resistance. "When the imperial army and troops, which was so numerous that neither fields nor forests could hold them, surrounded the fort from all sides; and the news of the victory of Hājipur came to Dā'ūd, he in spite of the fact that he had twenty thousand horsemen, and a huge park of artillery and numerous mast elephants, got into a boat at midnight on Sunday, the 21st Rabī'-us-Sānī and fled."<sup>1</sup> And Śrīdhara, on whom Dā'ūd had bestowed the title of Rājā Bikramjit, took Dā'ūd's wealth and treasures on a boat and fled towards the riverine tracts of south Bengal.<sup>2</sup> Gujar Khān with the main body of the Afghan forces and elephants fled by land towards the Bengal frontier and subsequently joined Dā'ūd. Akbar entered the Patna fort on the following day (22 Rabī' II 981 9 August 1574). A huge amount of arms and ammunition and 56 elephants fell into his hands. The emperor then began a pursuit of the fleeing Afghans and chased them upto Daryāpur, 40 miles to the east of Patna. On the way 400 elephants left by the Afghans fell into his hands. At Daryāpur Akbar abandoned the pursuit, appointing Mun'im Khān governor of Bengal and Bihar and entrusting him with the task of completing the conquest, began his return march to the capital.<sup>3</sup>

Mun'im Khān continued the advance towards Bengal with at least 20,000 men, and captured the military outposts of Surajgarh, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, and Kahlgaon (all in Bihar) in succession. Dā'ūd, joined by Gujar Khān, made his stand at the Teliagarhi pass; but some of the local Hindu zamindars guided the Mughal forces through the Rajmahal hills, and helped them to turn the pass on its southern side. Dā'ūd thus found the enemy all of a sudden on his rear and was obliged to abandon the pass and

<sup>1</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II, 445.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

retreat towards Orissa through Burdwan across Madaran and Midnapur in west Bengal. Mun'im Khān next entered Tanda, the capital of Bengal, on 4 Jamādī II 982/October 1574. His hold on Bengal and its outlying parts was however far from complete. While Dā'ūd lurked menacingly in the south-west, several Afghan chiefs held the different parts of the country, particularly in the north-east and the south-east. Under the circumstances Mun'im Khān, after settling some preliminary matters at Tanda, sent two expeditions, one under Todar Mall with a number of other *amīrs* and the main body of the forces towards the south-west in pursuit of Dā'ūd; and the other, a smaller expedition, under Majnūn Khān Qāqshāl, against the Afghan chief Sulaimān Manglī who, along with some other Afghan leaders, were holding the Ghoraghat region (Dinajpur district).<sup>1</sup> This latter expedition met with a temporary success in that Majnūn Khān Qāqshāl defeated and killed Sulaimān Manglī in battle and established the Mughal authority at Ghoraghat. "So much booty fell into the hands of the Qāqshāls that they were unable to keep it and hold it all. Majnūn Khān married the daughter of Sulaimān Manglī to his son Jabbārī."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand Todar Mall, far from executing the expedition with any speed and vigour, vacillated and halted at every stage, repeatedly seeking reinforcements.<sup>3</sup> Thus on reaching Madaran (Hugli district) and receiving information through his spies that Dā'ūd had been gathering his forces for a battle Todar Mall halted there and asked for reinforcements. Accordingly Mun'im Khān sent a "well-equipped army" with three Mughal nobles, Muhammad Qulī Khān Barlās, Muhammad Qulī Khān Tuqbaī and Muzaffar Khān Mughal to reinforce the Rājā.<sup>4</sup> With these reinforcements Todar Mall resumed the march but once again halted at the borders of Midnapur district where he received the news of the arrival of Junaid, "the son of Dā'ūd's uncle". The latter had formerly submitted to Akbar but had then

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 459. According to the *Akbarnāma* (tr. III, 169) Sulaimān Manglī, Kālāpāhār and Bābui Mānkālī were holding Ghoraghat.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II, 460.

<sup>3</sup> The accounts of Nizām al-Dīn (*Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī*), Abū al-Faḍl and Badāyūnī agree about the details of Todar Mall's march, with minor variations in mentioning the names of officers and places.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

fled from Agra to Gujarat wherefrom he now came to join Dā'ūd. Todar Mall, instead of intercepting and meeting Junaid with full force, miscalculated his strength and sent a small detachment under two subordinate officers against him. The Mughal contingent was severely routed and put to flight by Junaid.<sup>1</sup> Todar Mall then himself went up against Junaid, but the latter had by then made his way through the jungly region to join Dā'ūd. Todar Mall next halted at Midnapur where Muhammad Qūlī Barlās fell ill and died. This was made an excuse for falling back on Madaran wherefrom Todar Mall asked for further reinforcements. In the meantime the prospect of marching through the unchartered country caused some disaffection in the Mughal ranks. However, Mun'im Khān sent another reinforcement with three other generals, Shāhmam Khān Jalair, Lashkar Khān (Mīr Bakhshī) and Khwāja 'Abd Allah. With this reinforcement Todar Mall once again reached Midnapur, but, once again, hearing about Dā'ūd's preparations for battle, "sent swift messages to the Khān Khānān and informed him of the facts of the matter". It thus appears that while Todar Mall, inspite of all the reinforcements, did not dare fight Dā'ūd, Mun'im Khān, on his part, was equally unwilling to lead the campaign himself and wanted his generals to do the job. At this stage, however, Akbar intervened. Coming to know that the campaign was not being pushed through with sufficient vigour he directed Mun'im Khān to make no delay in extirpating Dā'ūd.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly the Khān-i-Khānān immediately left Tanda and joined Todar Mall.

Dā'ūd had in the meantime taken his position in Orissa where Qutlū Khān and others of his lieutenants had also gathered themselves. Dā'ūd fortified Katak and after leaving his family inside the fort advanced with his forces to meet the enemy. The two armies ultimately met at Tukorai, at present in the Midnapur district, on 20 Dhu al-Hijjah 983/3 March 1575. Mun'im Khān led the centre of the Mughal army, the vanguard was under Khān-i-'Ālam and others, backed by a supporting column under Qiya Khān, the left under Rājā Todar Mall, Lashkar Khān and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 461.

<sup>2</sup> *Akbarnāma*, III, 173.

others, and the right under Shaham Khān Jalair, Painda Muḥammad Khān Mughal and others. On the Afghan side, "Dā'ūd was at the centre; Ismā'il Khān Abdur, who had the title of Khān Khānān, with some other *amīrs* were at the left wing, and Khān Jahān [Qutlu Khān], governor of Orissa held the right wing. The vanguard was commanded by Gujar Khān who was the main prop of the Afghans."<sup>1</sup> It was a hotly contested fight in which victory seemed to be on the side of the Afghans. Before their fierce charge the Mughal army fell back. Gujar Khān made an irresistible dash with his elephants on the Mughal vanguard which broke down and the Mughal commander Khān-i-Ālam was killed. Gujar Khān next broke through the Mughal centre under Mun'im Khān and inflicted on him several sword wounds. The Mughal horses were frightened by Gujar Khān's elephants, their tasks, necks and heads being covered with black yak tails, and the skins of those animals.<sup>2</sup> Mun'im Khān retreated to a considerable distance and was hotly pursued by Gujar Khān. This was a tactical blunder in that Dā'ūd could not follow up for fear of being surrounded by the Mughal right and left wings. Yet these two wings were also somewhat shaken at the Afghan onslaught and the Afghans were almost on the point of victory when suddenly Gujar Khān fell by an arrow shot. This turned the tide of the battle. Mun'im Khān then rallied his troops and resumed the attack on the Afghans. The fall of Gujar Khān and the dispersion of the vanguard under him dispirited the Afghans. Dā'ūd could not stand for long the renewed attack of the Mughal army and finding his position untenable fled from the field towards Katak.<sup>3</sup>

The Mughals could not immediately pursue Dā'ūd because Mun'im Khān himself had received several wounds and a number of his officers and men had fallen in the battle. His army in general was also naturally very much exhausted. Therefore the Khān-i-Khānān decided to remain at that place for some days and after holding a conference with his *amīrs* sent a detachment under Todar Mall towards Katak with a view rather to keeping an eye on Dā'ūd's movements than really to haunt him down. Todar

<sup>1</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II., 463; *Akbarnāma*, III., 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Akbarnāma*, III., 176.

<sup>3</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II., 466.



Mall made a leisurely march toards Katak and on reaching Kalkalghati, a place near Katak, received the news that the Afghans had been again gathering there for giving a fight. Accordingly he informed Mun'im Khān about the situation stating further that there were dissensions among the Mughal *amīrs* who had accompanied him and added that if "reliance were placed on conceited men who were inefficient and heedless of the day of reckoning, things would again become difficult."<sup>1</sup> On getting this information Mun'im Khān proceeded to the spot with the rest of his army. Dā'ūd was not, however, in a position to resist the vast Mughal forces and he made overtures for peace. These overtures were accepted obviously because Mun'im Khān himself was not physically fit to fight, his wounds not having completely healed till then, and because the army, commanded by such worthies as Todar Mall and others whom he himself described as "conceited" and "inefficient", was also not in a mood to face the Afghans. Mun'im Khān demanded, however, that Dā'ūd should come in person to render homage."<sup>2</sup> The latter agreed to do so. The vanquished hero was received with due honour by Mun'im Khān which stands in sharp contrast with his previous act of putting to the sword all the Afghans who had fallen prisoners into his hand at the battle of Tukorai<sup>3</sup>. The Khān-i-Khānān ordered, as Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad describes,<sup>4</sup>

"that a grand assembly should be arranged. The *amīrs* and other servants of (the empire) who were present in this expedition took their stations, at the proper places, in accordance to their conditions and ranks ; and stood in lines in handsome array, at the door in front of the pavillion. Dā'ūd also with Afghan *amīrs* and great Sardārs came out of the fort of Katak-Banaras, and came to the Khān Khānān's camp. When they arrived near the pavillion, the Khān Khānān got up with great courtesy to show his respect and esteem for Dā'ūd, and walking across the floor, met and welcomed him. When they came face to face, Dā'ūd took his sword off from his belt and held it before himself. He said "when an esteemed person like you receives wounds, I am vexed with soldiering". The Khān Khānān took the sword from his hand, and made it over to one of his bodyguard [sic]. He caught Dā'ūd's hand with kindness; and gave him a place by his side, made affectionate and fatherly enquiries... After the

<sup>1</sup> *Akbarnāma*, III., 183-184.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab. Ak.*, II., 467.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 465.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 468.

hands had been taken away a conversation about the promises and engagements took place. Dā'ūd entered into an agreement, that as long as he lived he would not transgress from the path of loyalty; and he confirmed this agreement with strong and solemn oaths. A treaty was accordingly drawn up; and after this had been done, the Khān Khānān gave a sword, with a valuable jewelled belt, which was brought from his own office (*sarkar*) to Dā'ūd... and with his own hand tied the sword round his waist; and after showing him much courtesy and politeness, and presenting him with various sorts and kinds of elegant things bade him farewell...."

Thus was concluded the treaty of Katak between Mun'im Khān and Dā'ūd on 1 Muharram 983/12 April 1575. According to the terms of the treaty Dā'ūd ceded Bengal and Bihar to the Mughals and retained only Orissa as his possession. It was obviously an agreement of convenience forced upon the parties by their peculiar circumstances. So far as the Mughals were concerned, it secured for them neither peace nor an undisputed possession of Bengal. And as for Dā'ūd, he seems to have considered it as a personal agreement between him and Mun'im Khān and therefore valid so long as the latter remained in the scene. On the other hand, the other Afghan chiefs who were scattered in different parts of Bengal did not consider themselves bound in any way by Dā'ūd's agreement. In fact when Dā'ūd had been negotiating the treaty at Katak, Babui Mankali, Kālāpāhār and other chiefs in the Ghoraghat region had resumed the offensive against the Mughal general Majnūn Khān Qāqshāl and "having defeated him pursued him to the boundary of Tanda, and took possession of Gaur".<sup>1</sup> Majnūn Khān fell back on Tanda and with the assistance of another Mughal noble named Mu'in Khān took steps to defend the capital against the Afghans' advance. It was at that juncture that Mun'im Khān returned to Tanda from Katak.

Immediately on his return the Khān-i-Khānān marched against the Afghans who then withdrew towards Ghoraghat. Gaud and its environs were thus cleared of the Afghans, but the Ghoraghat region once again passed under the control of the Afghan chiefs. With a view to dealing the more effectively with them, and attracted also by the "magnificent buildings" and the "noble fort" of Gaud, Mun'im Khān next transferred the capital

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 469. The *Akbarnāma* (tr. III., 186) does not mention the taking of Gaud by the Afghans.

from Tanda to that hitherto abandoned city.<sup>1</sup> This proved to be a fatal step on his part; for the damp and unhealthy climate of Gaud caused a disastrous epidemic which carried away a large number of his men. Many of the nobles and officers ran away to Bihar to save themselves from the epidemic. Mun'im Khān lingered on till he fell seriously ill when he returned to Tanda only to die a few days afterwards in the same year (983/1575).

The epidemic at Gaud followed by the death of Mun'im Khān and others, and the withdrawal of most of the Mughal officers towards Bihar practically nullified the gains so far made by the Mughals. Hearing about Mun'im Khān's death and the disarray of the Mughals in Bengal and Bihar, Dā'ūd Khān came out of Orissa and attacked Tanda which fell to him. The remainder of the Mughal forces hastily retreated towards Patna. Dā'ūd once again became the master of west and north Bengal and Orissa. In east Bengal Īsā Khān, who is heard of for the first time at this stage, drove away a Mughal flotilla of war-boats under Shāh Bardī. Akbar, on coming to know about these developments, promptly appointed Husain Qulī Beg with the title of Khān Jahān governor of Bengal and directed him to "take with him the *amīrs* and *jāgīrdārs*, who had relinquished the territory of Bengal, and to attack Dā'ūd Khān." Khān Jahān met the retreating Mughal army near Bhagalpur in Bihar. At the approach of the Mughal army under Khān Jahān, Dā'ūd posted three thousand select Afghans at Teliagarhi to defend the pass and himself with the rest of the Afghan forces took position in the Rajmahal hills, near the narrow passage between the spur of the hills and the Ganges. Khān Jahān encountered the Afghans first at Teliagarhi where after a severe fight and the fall of about half of the latter, the Mughals took possession of the pass. Khān Jahān next marched against Dā'ūd at Rajmahal. The Afghan position was considered so strong that it appeared almost impossible to dislodge them from that place. Moreover, the Shī'a'-Sunnī animosity among the Mughal ranks, the onset of rains and shortage of food supplies prevented any immediate attack on Dā'ūd's position.<sup>2</sup> For about

<sup>1</sup> *Akbarnāma*, III., 226.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 250-251.

four months Khān Jahān was compelled to remain at Rajmahal facing the enemy. In one skirmish, which was a sort of trial of strength, the Mughals were worsted and the commander of the contingent, Khwāja 'Abd Allah, was killed. At this Akbar ordered his Bihar governor Muẓaffar Khān Turbatī, who was at that time investing the Rohtas fort in Bihar then being held by a band of the Afghans, to join Khān Jahān. Accordingly Muẓaffar Khān Turbatī came to the aid of Khān Jahān with "five thousand horsemen". Akbar also sent 'Abd Allah Khān and others with boat-loads of provisions and ammunitions. On the other hand all the principal Afghan leaders like Junaid, Qutlū Khān and Kālāpāhār rallied round Dā'ūd. Finally, on 15 Rabī' II 984/12 July 1576 the famous battle of Rajmahal took place in which fate turned against Dā'ūd. Even the Mughal accounts show that it was a very hard contest wherein the Afghan generals gave a good account of themselves. "Both the armies lost numbers of men" from whose dead bodies "mounds were raised". The tide turned against Dā'ūd when Junaid, who commanded the left wing of Dā'ūd's army, was struck by a cannon ball which caused his death shortly afterwards.<sup>1</sup> The right wing was under Kālāpāhār, while the vanguard was led by Qutlu Khān. Dā'ūd held the centre. Junaid's fall, however, dispirited the Afghans who were ultimately overpowered and compelled to flee from the field. Both Kālāpāhār and Qutlū Khān succeeded in escaping,<sup>2</sup> but Dā'ūd's horse, in course of his flight, was stuck fast in a quagmire and he was taken prisoner. The Khān Jahān ordered his immediate execution, considering his life "to be a source of disturbance and insurrection."

Thus ended the life and struggle of Dā'ūd Shah, the last Afghan king of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. His outright execution was undoubtedly unfortunate. "One cannot help noting", to quote Abdus Salam, "the entire absence of chivalry on the part of this

<sup>1</sup> According to another account Jaunaid was struck by the cannon ball falling on his bed the previous night and that in spite of the wounds he took part in the battle.

<sup>2</sup> N.K. Bhattasali (*B.P.P.* 1928, 45-47), quoting *Makhyan-i-Afghāna*, an Afghan chronicle, suggests that Qutlū Khān was in treasonable correspondence with the Mughals and agreed, in lieu of a promise to be left in possession of some parganas in Orissa, to so act on the battle field as to occasion Dā'ūd's defeat. There is, however, no such indication of his treachery in the Mughal accounts, nor does his subsequent conduct in continuing a stiff resistance to the Mughals support such a surmise.

Mughal general, Khān Jahān. If he possessed one-quarter of the chivalry of this own predecessor in office, the Khān-i-Khānān, he could have never extended his hand to the perpetration of this brutality, which was as ferocious as it was ungallant. A worthy and heroic foe like Dā'ūd Shāh deserved a better fate, and it is a pity that Khān Jahān's master, ... Akbar, should not have provided against such a misdeed, which must reflect adversely on the Emperor's memory itself."<sup>1</sup> The defeat and execution of Dā'ūd Shāh removed a determined and formidable enemy of the Mughals, but it did not in any way secure the Mughal hold over Bengal, nor did it put an end to the Afghan resistance. A period of more than thirty years was to elapse before the Afghan resistance in different parts of the country was eliminated. With Dā'ūd, however, the independent Muslim royalty in Bengal and the Afghan era of its history may be said to have to come an end.

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 169, n 1.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ‘ĪSĀ KHĀN AND THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE

#### I: THE SITUATION AFTER DĀ’ŪD’S EXECUTION

Khān Jahān’s doing away with Dā’ūd did not clear the way for the Mughals. In fact it only marked the beginning of a long-drawn resistance by the Afghan *amīrs* and *jāgīrdārs* who had been scattered and settled over the different parts of the country. These chiefs were now joined by the other Afghan leaders and their followers who were dispersed in the country after Dā’ūd’s defeat. Henceforth they either acted in concert whenever possible, or built up individual centres of resistance, often employing the guerrilla tactics of hitting at their convenient times and places and then withdrawing into the interior of the country, mainly in its riverine tracts. In the context of this development Sher Shāh’s administrative arrangement of dividing and apportioning his Bengal possession among a number of Afghan chiefs now appeared to be a prudent measure. The disadvantage of divided leadership which this measure entailed and which tended to be a point of the Afghans’ weakness in their days of power now turned out to be an important factor of their strength in the face of the Mughal’s advance. The latter, in consequence, had to conquer each and every area of the land, almost village by village, and this task took for them a period of thirty years more, covering the entire second half of Akbar’s reign and almost the first half of that of his successor Jahāngīr.

The situation was rendered all the more complicated by the rise of a number of Hindu adventurers who, taking advantage of the eclipse of the central authority after Dā’ūd’s retreat into Orissa and then his defeat and death, grabbed at portions of the country and set themselves up as chiefs in their respective localities. With the exception of one or two of them, however, they, including Pratāpāditya, who has been supposed by some later writers to be the most powerful and “patriotic” of them, were the earliest not only to submit to the Mughals, but also to cooperate with them in their drive against the Afghan chiefs. In fact it was mainly by using these Hindu chiefs that the Mughals ultimately succeeded in

subduing the Afghans in Bengal. In forming a correct idea about both the Afghan 'amīrs and the Hindu chiefs it is necessary to bear in mind that "Bengali nationalist" writers of the early twentieth century have generalized and depicted them as fighters for freedom against "Mughal imperialism,"<sup>1</sup> while "Indian nationalist" writers, writing towards the end of the British rule and approaching the subject apparently under the influence of the Congress philosophy of "united India", have treated them as "the enemies of Mughal peace and unification", speaking of their defeat as an end of "east Bengal's isolation."<sup>2</sup> The Hindu chiefs and the Afghan 'amīrs differed from one another in their origins as also in their attitudes and struggles. The former, rising on the ruins of the Afghan state, were generally happy to cooperate with the rising Mughal sun, if only they were left with the substance of their gains; while the latter, representing the declining ruling families, really fought for *their* freedom in Bengal against their age-old rivals, the Mughals. It would therefore be equally misleading to equate the Hindu chiefs and the Afghan 'amīrs by saying, as one writer has done, that "Pratāpāditya and Kedār Rāi, 'Īsā Khān and Anwar Ghāzī were not tribal heads, nor scions of any old and decayed royal house. They were at best bloated zamindars..."<sup>3</sup> Besides being symptomatic of the "Indian nationalist" approach, the statement is palpably incorrect. None of the Hindu chiefs in question could be traced prior to the Afghan era; some of them were in fact officers under the Karrānīs. The Afghan 'amīrs were, on the other hand, really scions of royal and ruling families. Nor could any impartial observer equate Kedār Rāi, the faithful ally of 'Īsā Khān, who shed the last drop of his blood in fighting against the Mughals, with Pratāpāditya, the rather treacherous son of a faithless officer of the Afghans, who, in the words of the writer himself, "tamely submitted to the Mughal general, without holding out."<sup>4</sup>

After the battle of Rajmahal the Mughal authority was effective only over a very limited area round the capital city of Tanda,

<sup>1</sup> See for instance S.C. Mitra, *Jasohar-Khulnā Itihāsa*, Vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> For instance Jadunath Sarkar in *H.B.*, II, pp. 225, 226-229.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

lying about 15 miles south-east of Malda town. The rest of the country was out of their jurisdiction. The couple of outposts which Khān Jahān's predecessor had established at Ghorāghāt (Dinajpur-Rangpur region) and Fathabād (Faridpur) were soon thrown into a defensive position and then overpowered. At Ghorāghāt, in fact, there was a strong concentration of the Afghans. The Qāqshāls, who were placed there to look after the Mughal interest, were disaffected and soon turned against the Mughals themselves. In the Faridpur region two Afghan chiefs, Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Qutb, organized a strong river flotilla and established their control over the area. The region lying to the east of the river system, and comprising mainly the districts of **Dacca and Mymensingh**, was the heartland of 'Isā Khān Masnad-i-'Alā's power, who soon emerged as the leader of the Afghan chiefs and who had his headquarters at Khizirpur (Narayanganj). Many Afghan notables took shelter with him. Of them Ibrāhīm Khān and Karim Dād played a conspicuous part at the initial stage of the anti-Mughal struggle. A number of other *zamindars* also flourished under the protective wing of 'Isā Khān.<sup>1</sup>

In the south-west the Afghan power was in fact revived by Qutlu Khān, one of Dā'ūd's generals and his governor of Orissa. After having escaped with his troops from the battle field of Rajmahal Qutlu Khān ousted one by one the Mughal officers from Orissa, Hugli and Burdwan and built up a diminished but compact Afghan state comprising Orissa and the south-western part of Bengal upto Hugli and Burdwan. Kālāpāhār, who had similarly escaped from the battle field, did not settle at any specific region, but moved about with his strong cavalry from south Bihar through west Bengal to north Bengal, setting at naught the symblance of Mughal authority at every place which he visited. As long as he lived he proved to be a roving nightmare to the Mughals. In the south Dā'ūd's earstwhile officer and confidant Śrīdhar (or Śrīhari) carved out an independent estate for himself. After Dā'ūd's defeat at Patna at the hands of Akbar Śrīdhar fled with the former's treasures which were in his keeping towards the riverine tracts of the present Khulna district and there

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, pp. 276, 284.



set himself up as an independent chief, assuming the title of *Mahārāja Vikramāditya* and conferring on his son the equally grandiloquent title of *Pratāpāditya*. Śrīdhar's power lay partly in the immense wealth of the fallen monarch Dā'ūd, which he had arrogated to himself, and partly of the peculiar geography of the land which he had chosen as his abode. Intersected by numerous rivers and alluvial tracts, his domain was not easily approachable to the Mughal cavalry; but when the Mughals under Jahāngīr appeared with a strong river flotilla, Śrīdhar's son Pratāpāditya readily submitted without much resistance. To the east of Śrīdhar's sphere of activity another Hindu zamindar, Kandarpa Nārāyan,<sup>1</sup> established himself over the greater portion of the Barisal district with his headquarters first at Kachuā and later on at Mādharpāshā. Across the river and to the north-east of Barisal flourished another Hindu zamindar, Lakshman Mānikya, in the northern region of modern Noakhali district, then known as Bhulua.<sup>2</sup> The relations between the Bāklā (Barisal) and Bhulua zamindar were not always cordial. In the extreme south and south-east, comprising southern Barisal, the various islands at the mouth of the rivers and the Chittagong district, the Arakanese and the Portuguese alternately exercised their jurisdictions and carried on their depredations.

Khān Jahān's activities shortly following the battle of Rajmahal may be noted in the passing. After the battle the combined Mughal forces separated. Muẓaffar Khān Turbatī, the governor of Bihar, proceeded with his troops towards Patna. On the way he sent a contingent under Ma'sūm Khān to suppress Husain Khān Afghan who had been creating trouble in south Bihar while the Mughal forces were engaged with Dā'ūd. Husain Khān was defeated and driven out of the locality; but then Kālāpāhār appeared on the scene "with 800 corps of cavalry" and besieged Ma'sūm Khān in his fort. The latter "battered down the rear-wall of the fort, sallied out and gave battle to Kālāpāhār" who, being overpowered by sheer numbers, was at last defeated

<sup>1</sup> There is no authentic account regarding Kandarpa Nārāyan's origin. Local legends about him were noted by J. Wise in *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, pp. 205-207.

<sup>2</sup> See for traditions regarding him *ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

and driven from that place.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime Khān Jahān had no rest in Bengal. While preparing for the battle of Rajmahal Dā'ūd had sent his mother and other members of his family and the remainder of his treasures with two of his trusted lieutenants, Mahmūd Khān Khāṣ Khel, popularly known as Mitti, and Jamshid, towards Sātgaon (Hugli). When Dā'ūd was defeated and killed, many of the surviving Afghans began to collect at Sātgaon. At this Khān Jahān hurriedly marched there and defeated and dispersed the Afghans. Dā'ūd's mother and other members of his family surrendered to Khān Jahān. Mitti also surrendered, but was put to death most probably "to enable the viceroy to appropriate part of Dā'ūd's treasures then in his keeping."<sup>2</sup> After this Khān Jahān's attention was drawn towards the east, near Dacca, where the Afghan chiefs Ibrāhīm and Karīm Dād collected their forces and even induced the Mughal admiral Shāh Bardī, then in that region, to join them in a rising against the Mughals. Khān Jahān marched against them and forced Shāh Bardī to submit; but Ibrāhīm and Karīm Dād withdrew into 'Isā Khān's dominions. While returning from this expedition, however, the Mughal flotilla was routed by the Afghans in Faridpur under Majlis Dilawar and Majlis Quṭb who, with their strong river flotilla came out from their base in that district and swooped down upon the Mughals. Shortly after his return from this expedition Khān Jahān fell ill and after a prolonged illness died on 19 December, 1578.

## II. THE GREAT EASTERN REBELLION

On Khān Jahān's death his brother Ismā'il Qulī officiated as the Mughal viceroy for about three months. In the meantime Akbar transferred Muzaffar Khān Turbatī, the governor of Bihar, to Bengal. The latter arrived at Tanda in April 1579. As yet the Mughal position in Bengal had not improved much upon what had been the state of affairs after the battle of Rajmahal. And now most of the Mughal nobles and army in the east rose in rebellion against Akbar and were soon joined by the Afghans in Bengal and Orissa. The rebellion continued for about seven years, from 1580

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ*, p. 165; *Ain*, tr. Blochmann, Vol. I., p. 431 n.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.*, II., p. 195.

to 1587. During this period Mughal authority in Bengal and Orissa, and in the greater part of Bihar, was practically extinct.

The main cause of the revolt was Akbar's religious idiosyncracies and heterodoxy. Ever since his establishment of the *'Ibādat Khāna* at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575 Akbar had been gradually deviating from *Sunnī* Islam and indulging in innovations. This greatly alarmed a large section of his own nobles and officers who were sincere Muslims. Particularly a good many of the generals and soldiers who had been sent out to the east were *Sunnī* Muslims and were intensely dissatisfied with the emperor's manifest alienation from Islam. Signs of dissatisfaction and insubordination in the rank and file of the army in the east were visible even during Mun'im Khān's and Todar Mall's march against Dā'ūd in Orissa.<sup>1</sup> And now, in 1579, when Akbar assumed by his so-called "Infallibility Decree" the position of supreme arbiter in matters of religion, this dissatisfaction reached its climax. Akbar himself added fuel to the fire by expelling to the eastern provinces a number of '*ulamā*' who did not see eye to eye with his heterodoxical proclivities. The Muslims of these provinces, particularly the Afghans, were *Sunnīs*, and their example soon caught the notice of the Mughal officers and army there. Many of the latter, such as the Qāqshāls in Ghorāghāt and the contingent under Ma'sum Khān Kābulī in south Bihar were of Afghan origin. They felt themselves more akin to the *Sunnī* Afghans in Bengal and Orissathan to the heterodoxical emperor at Delhi. To these were also added some material reasons. Khwāja Shāh Mansūr was at that time the Imperial *Dīwān* or finance minister. He enforced certain rules for the purpose of eradicating corruption and dishonesty in the army, particularly the rules regarding the branding of horses. This caused discontent among the Mughal army chiefs in Bengal and Bihar. Particular discontent was caused by the interference with the local allowances of soldiers serving in the eastern provinces. Akbar had directed that the pay of the men serving in Bengal should be increased by 100 per cent, and that of those serving in Bihar by 50 per cent. Shāh Mansūr took it upon himself to order that these allowances should

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp. 253-254. Also *Tab.*, II., pp. 462, 467.

be cut down to 50 and 20 per cent respectively. This proved to be the immediate cause of the revolt. The leaders of the dissatisfied group were the Qāqshāls and Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī who soon established contact with Mirzā Hākīm, Akbar's step-brother at Kabul, and planned to place him on the throne. The signal for the revolt was given by the courageous Qādī of Jaunpur, Mulla Muḥammad Yazdī, who issued a formal ruling (*fatwa*) to the effect that Akbar's heterodoxy justified rebellion against him. Both the Qādī and the Imperial *Dīwān*, who were naturally regarded as the main instigators of the trouble, were subsequently put to death by Akbar.<sup>1</sup>

The rebellion started in Bihar early in January 1580 and was quickly followed by risings of the Bengal officers. At the same time Mirzā Muḥammad Hākīm advanced upon the Panjab from Kabul. Akbar was intelligent enough to realize that Mirzā Hākīm's move from Kabul was a graver danger and therefore resolved to meet it himself, leaving his officers to deal with the Bengal rebellion. Accordingly he remained at the capital, making elaborate preparations for an expedition against Mirza Hākīm, and sent Raja Todar Mall accompanied by Tarsun Khān towards the east. Before the latter arrived, however, things had moved quickly in the eastern provinces. The Bengal and Bihar officers combined and took possession of the Teliagarhi pass and then defeated the loyal troops under Muzaḥfar Khān Turbatī who took shelter in the fort of Tanda. Almost every one deserted the Mughal viceroy. The rebels besieged the fort which fell after some resistance on 19 April 1580. Muzaḥfar Khān Turbatī was captured and put to death.<sup>2</sup> The *khutba* was then read in Mirzā Muḥammad Hākīm's name, and Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī was proclaimed his regent (*wakīl*) and Bābā Khān Qāqshāl as viceroy in Bengal and Bihar. The "whole of the countries of Bengal and Bihar", writes Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad, "came into their possession; and about thirty thousand horsemen collected round those ungrateful wretches".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Akbarnāma*, III, pp. 427-434, 442-454; and *Muntakhab*, II., pp. 289-290.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab.* II, 532-533.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

About a month after Muzaffar Khān Turbatī's death Todar Mall and Tarsun Khān reached Monghyr in Bihar. The rebels advanced to oppose them. Todar Mall did not dare face them in an open contest and stood in the defensive, fortifying his camp by raising walls and digging a moat round it. For about a month some skirmishings took place between the two parties when another reinforcement sent by Akbar under Shāhbāz Khān joined Todar Mall by the end of June, 1580. The rebels withdrew to Bengal. Todar Mall then took possession of Monghyr and Patna. A Mughal detachment next marched against Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī, who was then in south Bihar, and recovered from him the towns of Gaya, Bihar and Sherghati by the end of September.<sup>1</sup> At that stage another reinforcement under A'zam Khān Kokā joined Todar Mall and Shāhbāz Khān. This, instead of strengthening the Mughal position, rather resulted in a division of command among them. Shāhbāz Khān refused to act as a subordinate to A'zam Khān Kokā and set up an almost independent court and camp at Patna; while Todar Mall and A'zam Khān remained separately encamped at Hājipur, opposite Patna. This division in their ranks prevented any concerted action on their part and they remained practically inactive in their respective posts throughout the following year (1581).<sup>2</sup>

Taking advantage of this inactivity of the Mughal generals the rebels consolidated their position in Bengal as well as south Bihar. On the other hand Qutlū Khān, the deceased Afghan monarch Dā'ūd Khān's lieutenant and governor of Orissa, also strengthened his position in that province by gathering round him a large band of Afghans. The only reverse which the rebels may be said to have suffered during that year was the death of Bābā Qāqshāl due to cancer and the defeat of a small rebel contingent near Ajodhya at the hand of Shāhbāz Khān. But this was more than counterbalanced by the gains they made during that period. The death of Bābā Qāqshāl was a boon in disguise in that it paved the way for the unification of the rebel command under Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī who emerged as their most important leader and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 533-536; *Akbarnāma*, III, 467-477, 485-490.

<sup>2</sup> *Tab.* II, 541, 543.

who established his headquarters at Chatmohar in Pabna district. Another favourable development for the rebels was that Qutlū Khān of Orissa established contact with them during this period. He sent one of his generals, Bahādur Kurūh, with a band of sturdy Afghans to Tanda where they joined the local rebels. To add to their advantage Aʿzam Khān was about the same time recalled to court for a short visit. At this a combined Afghan and rebel Mughal force advanced into Bihar and recovered Hājīpur and several other *parganas* in its vicinity.<sup>1</sup> About the same time the isolated Mughal outpost in Faridpur, then under a *faujdār* named Murād Khān, was also lost. Murād Khān died suddenly where – upon a local zamindar, Mukunda, murdered his sons and set himself up as the chief of that place.

The inactivity of the Mughal generals in 1581 appears also to be due to the fact that Akbar had in February of that year marched against Mirzā Muḥammad Hākīm of Kabul. The Mughal generals in the east naturally awaited the outcome of that expedition. At Akbar's approach, however, Mirzā Hākīm fled from the Panjab and offered little resistance to Akbar who entered Kabul in August. Mirza Hākīm asked for pardon which was ultimately granted. After staying at Kabul for some time and allowing Hākīm to remain in possession of that territory Akbar returned to the capital early in December 1581. The most critical year of his reign was over. He was now relieved of his worst fear of a fratricidal war and of a serious contender for the throne at the head of formidable enemies in the east and the west. He could now devote his undivided attention to the suppression of the rebellion in the east.

In the meantime the rebels, after having captured Hājīpur, had begun to press on Patna itself; but the Mughal generals there were by that time heartened by the news of Akbar's successful return from the Kabul expedition. Šādiq, the Mughal commandant, heroically defended Patna for forty days and repulsed a determined Afghan attack on 2-3 April 1582; and on the following day inflicted a defeat upon the rebels on the eastern bank of the Gandak. The rebel forces now withdrew towards

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 556.

Bengal. Shortly afterwards Akbar sent Khān-i-A'zam as governor of Bengal with orders on the governors of Allahabad, Oudh and Bihar to join him with their forces to suppress the rebellion. The Mughal forces assembled near Hājipur and then advanced towards Bengal. On 20th March of the following year (1583) Khān-i-A'zam succeeded in recapturing the strategic Teliagarhi pass from the rebels; but then his further advance was opposed by a formidable army composed of the forces of Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī, Qutlū Khān of Orissa and the Qāqshāls of Ghorāghāt. The number of the enemy forces overawed the Khān-i-A'zam who made urgent appeals to Akbar for reinforcements. For nearly a month the two armies stood facing each other and occasionally exchanging gun fires. On 24 April (1583) an important naval battle took place between the Mughal fleet and the Afghan flotilla which had come up from Faridpur. It ended unfavourably for the Afghans whose commander of the fleet fell in the action. This reverse was shortly followed by another river-cum-land engagement in which also the Afghans were worsted and their redoubtable leader Kālāpāhār, who was "singular for his skill in river fighting", was killed. This was a great loss for the Afghans and the rebels. The successive reverses naturally caused some dissensions in their ranks which were skilfully utilized by the Mughal general Khān-i-A'zam who succeeded in winning over the Qāqshāls. The latter deserted the rebel camp and welcomed a Mughal contingent at Ghoraghat for their protection against the vengeance of Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī and his Afghan allies. The latter now withdrew into 'Isā Khān's dominions in eastern Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

Khān-i-A'zam did not, however, follow up this success by further advance into the interior of the country. On the contrary he now pressed Akbar for transfer from Bengal. Accordingly the emperor ordered on 18 May 1583 his transfer to Hājipur (in Bihar) and asked Shāhbāz Khān, then at Patna, to succeed him in Bengal. Khān-i-A'zam immediately left Bengal without even waiting for the arrival of Shāhbāz Khān, leaving Wazīr Khān in charge of the Mughal army. It appears that when Khān-i-A'zam

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 560.

had been pressing on Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī and others in north Bengal, Qutlū Khān had sent an Afghan force from Orissa who were found concentrating near Burdwan just at the moment of Khān-i-A'zam's departure from Bengal. His deputy Wazīr Khān therefore led an expedition against those Afghans in the vicinity of Burdwan and defeated them in an engagement on 15 July 1583. The Mughal commander did not however dare pursue them into Qutlū Khān's dominions. On the other hand taking advantage of Khān-i-A'zam's departure and Wazīr Khān's absence in the south, Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī emerged from his refuge in 'Īsā Khān's dominion, raided upto within 14 miles of Tanda and, early in October, besieged a Mughal garrison under Tarsun Khān at Tejpur in west Dinajpur district. At that stage Shāhbāz Khān arrived in Bengal from Patna and hurried to Tarsun Khān's relief. On Shāhbāz Khān's advance with a vast Mughal force Ma'sūm Khān withdrew into east Bengal. At the same time another Afghan leader, Jabbārī, took cover with his forces in Kuch Bihar. Shāhbāz Khān recaptured Ghorāghāt in November 1583 and plundered the homes of the Afghans at Sherpur, Bogra.

### III: 'ISĀ KHĀN MASNAD-I-'ALĀ: THE EAST BENGAL WAR

From the time of the defection of the Qāqshāls, and more particularly with the arrival of Shāhbāz Khān with a fresh army, Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī and the other rebels, together with the Afghan chiefs, fell back for support and protection mainly on 'Īsā Khān in east Bengal. Henceforth the latter headed the anti-Mughal forces in Bengal. No detailed and reliable information is available about 'Īsā Khān's previous life and career except that he was well settled in his dominion by the time the Mughals defeated and killed the last Afghan ruler Dā'ūd Khān and scattered his forces in all directions. The Mughal chronicler Abū al-Faḍl's statement about 'Īsā Khān is both confusing and misleading. In the *Āin-i-Akbarī* Abū al-Faḍl refers to him as "Īsā Afghān",<sup>1</sup> whereas in the *Akbarnāma* the same writer states that 'Īsā Khān's father was originally a "Bāis" Rajput who embraced Islam during the time of Sulṭān 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh apparently for

<sup>1</sup> *Āin*, II., 117.



marrying the latter's daughter, which he did, and then settled in east Bengal under his Muslim name of Sulaimān Khān. Subsequently Sulaimān Khān proved rebellious against the Delhi ruler Salīm Shāh (Islam Shāh), son of Sher Shāh, and was therefore defeated and killed by Tāj Khān Karrānī, brother of Sulaimān Karrānī, who was sent by the Sūr ruler to quell the rebellion. Sulaimān Khān's two sons, 'Īsā and Ismā'īl were taken prisoners and then sold as slaves. Subsequently, after much searchings their uncle, Qutb al-Dīn, recovered them and brought them back to Bengal.<sup>1</sup> This latter statement of Abū al-Faḍl's seems to have been the nucleus of a late nineteenth century tradition which James Wise collected from some descendants of 'Īsā Khān who were then in possession of some landed estates (*zamindaries*) in different parts of Dacca and Mymensingh districts. This tradition mentions 'Īsā Khān's father being originally a Bāis Rajput named Kālīdās Gazdāni but omits the intermediate incidents of his being killed by Tāj Khān and of 'Īsā and his brother being sold into slavery etc. It adds, however, that there was a personal combat between 'Īsā Khān and the Mughal general Mānsingh who being worsted declined to further wage war against him, embraced and acclaimed him as a friend. 'Īsā Khān also renounced his hostility to the Mughals, accompanied Mānsingh to Agra to seek Akbar's pardon and favour. The latter not only pardoned 'Īsā Khān but also conferred on him the title of *Masnad-i-'Alā* and an estate of 22 *parganas* in east Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

Almost all the subsequent writers have generally accepted this account of 'Īsā Khān's origin and early life, supported, as they seem to think, by the contemporary historian Abū al-Faḍl as well as by what is termed the "family tradition". Some of the writers have even added their own assumptions and reasonings in support of the account. One of them, for instance, seeks to coordinate the two divergent statements of Abū al-Faḍl thus: "This seems to indicate that the *Ain* was written first, and before Abul Fazl had received correct information."<sup>3</sup> The same writer even goes further

<sup>1</sup> Ak. III, 342.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wise, "On the Bāra Bhuiyās of Eastern Bengal", *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, 210, 213-14.

<sup>3</sup> H. Beveridge, "On 'Īsā Khān, the ruler of Bhāṭi, in the time of Akbar", *J.A.S.B.*, 1904, 57.

than both Abū al-Faḍl and the above mentioned tradition, and observes: "As ʿIsā Khān and his brother were sold as slaves, it may be presumed, inspite of the tradition mentioned by Dr. Wise, that their father remained a Hindu, for it seems that a Muhammadan cannot be sold into slavery by a Muhammadan."<sup>1</sup> Another writer fills the gap by supposing that Kālidās Gazdānī belonged to the Bāiswārā Rājputs of Oudh where early in the twentieth century they were found in possession also of an estate of 22 *parganas*.<sup>2</sup> And taking his cue from this last assumption a yet another writer concluded: "... the fact that ʿIsā Khān was also granted the same number of *parganahs* in Eastern Bengal may be regarded as some actual proof of his descent from the Rajputs of Baiswara."<sup>3</sup>

It should at once be noted that *it is not a fact* that ʿIsā Khān was granted any *zamindari* by Akbar nor, as will be seen later on, did the former ever go to Agra to receive Akbar's pardon and favours, not to speak of his having never met Mānsingh in any combat.<sup>4</sup> If such was ever the case, the episode would have found a very prominent description at the hand of Abū al-Faḍl and the other court historians, especially as the subjugation of Bengal was one of the most important issues for the Mughals at that time. Abū al-Faḍl's and other court historians' total silence about such a memorable and rather dramatic event as that of ʿIsā Khān's submission and visit to Agra is the strongest proof of the imaginary nature of at least this part of the tradition. The story of ʿIsā Khān's having received the title of *Masnad-i-ʿAlā* from Akbar is thus also incorrect. In fact it is not a Mughal title, and on no other of the numerous nobles and officials was it conferred by Akbar; nor could the latter be reasonably supposed to have granted such a high title, which means "the Sublime Throne" indicating full sovereignty, to a defeated and subordinate chief as ʿIsā Khān is made to be by the tradition. The title is essentially an Afghan tradition and, as one writer points out, ʿIsā Khān might have "as well assumed this title himself, in imitation of the Afghan nobilities of his days who took similar titles, namely *Hazrat-i-ʿAla*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>2</sup> R. Burn in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, VI., 218.

<sup>3</sup> H.E. Stapleton, in *J.A.S.B.*, October, 1909, V. No. 9, New Series, 370, n 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Infra*, pp. 284-287.

by Sulaimān Karrānī and Shir Shah, and *Masnad-i-'Ala* by Tāj Khan Karrānī."<sup>1</sup> A further fact showing the untrustworthiness of the tradition may be noted. When James Wise met the descendants of 'Īsā Khān in the early seventies of the nineteenth century an intense public discussion and enquiry was going on about the rights and titles of the Bengal *zamindars* in general consequent upon the agrarian disturbances of the time and an intended tenancy legislation which in fact took place shortly afterwards. A number of the prominent *zamindars* had then brought forward historical and ancient claims to their *zamindari* possessions. In the context of this situation it is just reasonable to assume that the descendants of 'Īsā Khān had recourse to this tradition, ingeniously blended with Abū al-Faḍl's information, to emphasize their otherwise not bad title to the *zamindaries*.

As regards Abū al-Faḍl's information it is also open to serious doubts. There is no definite information that the *Akbarnāma*, in which 'Īsā Khān's father is represented as a converted Rājput, was composed after the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, in which 'Īsā Khān is described as an Afghan. In fact the reverse seems to be the case, for both the *Akbarnāma* and the *Ā'in-i-Akbarī* form one continuous work, the latter being an appendix to the former dealing specifically with administrative matters and regulations. Nor does Abū al-Faḍl appear to have gathered better information about Bengal when he wrote either the *Ā'in* or the *Akbarnāma*. Thus while referring to 'Īsā Khān in the latter work Abū al-Faḍl states that he was the ruler of *Bhāṭī*, which, he says, had Tanda on the south and the ocean and the termination of the mountains of Tibet on the north! It was also with such a wonderful knowledge about the country and its political situation that he included the whole of Bengal in Akbar's revenue settlement delineating in exact figures the revenue receipts of each *sarkar* (revenue division). Every one now knows how grossly incorrect Abū al-Faḍl was in thus including the whole of Bengal in his patron's dominion. Secondly, the first part of his story about 'Īsā Khān's origin in the *Akbaranāma* itself

<sup>1</sup> M.I. Borah, n. 6 to Ch. III of his translation of the *B.G.*, *B.G.* II, 796. There is also no historical evidence in support of the statement of the Tripura *Rājmaṇī* that the Tripura King Amara Mānikya conferred the title on 'Īsā Khān.

seems to be belied by what he says in the second part. Thus he says that 'Īsā Khān and his brother were recovered from Turan afterwards by their *uncle*, "their father's brother", Qutb al-Dīn Khān. This naturally raises the question how could the uncle have a Muslim and clearly Afghan name? Was he also a Rajput convert? If not, how could 'Īsā Khān have a Muslim uncle (father's brother) unless he had at least a Muslim grandfather? Thus if we have to accept Abū al-Faḍl's story we have to assume or discover other converts from among 'Īsā Khān's ancestors which is not at all indicated by Abū al-Faḍl or any other chronicler. Thirdly, it is also highly unlikely, though Abū al-Faḍl would have us believe so, that Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusain Shāh gave his daughter in marriage to a new Rajput convert to Islam. Moreover the supposed son-in-law is represented as holding an almost independent dominion in east Bengal; but none of Ḥusain Shāh's numerous inscriptions, nor any other source, refers to any of his officers or relatives bearing the name of Sulaimān Khān, the new name of the alleged convert. Fourthly, if 'Īsā Khān and his brother were ever sold as slaves during the time of Salīm Shah Sūr (1553-54), the subsequent act of tracing and recovering them from Turan must have taken from five to ten years, by which time Bengal had passed under Sulaimān Karrānī and north India under Akbar. This is important; for if Tāj Khān, Sulaimān Karrānī's brother, had killed 'Īsā Khān's father and sold 'Īsā Khān and his brother into slavery, they could not have been allowed to return and reestablish themselves apparently in their father's former dominion of eastern Bengal by Sulaimān Karrānī whose rule continued till 1574. Yet, by all accounts, 'Īsā Khān is found strongly entrenched in his dominion about that time. Thus Abū al-Faḍl's story of 'Īsā Khān's father being a Rājput convert, and of 'Īsā Khān and his brother being sold as slaves etc., is opposed to both reason and well known facts of history, and should be treated as only an imaginary tale. Before leaving this subject, however, the fallacy of the above mentioned presumption of 'Īsā Khān's supposed father having continued to remain a Hindu may be indicated. It was not the father, but the sons, who are stated to have been sold as slaves. Therefore the objection to a Muslim's

selling other Muslims as slaves does to apply in this case, the more so because the alleged father was already killed when the sons were captured. If, on the other hand, the implication is that being the sons of a Hindu 'Īsā khān and his brother were also Hindus so that they could be sold as slaves, then we would be led on to a position which neither Abū al-Faḍl, nor James Wise's tradition, nor even any other source would warrant us in taking. The simple fact is that Abū al-Faḍl's story is incorrect. There is thus no need to find out more converts from among 'Īsā Khān's uncles, nor to make more Hindus of 'Īsā Khān and his brother, or of their father.

Like many other Afghan nobles of the time, 'Īsā Khān was also an Afghan chief who established himself in the country and carved out a dominion in eastern Bengal by the time the Mughals were pressing on from the west; and because of his power and geographical position he ultimately emerged as the leader of the Afghan resistance in Bengal. At that stage he is seen clearly in possession of a compact territory comprising at least the greater parts of the present districts of Dacca and Tippera and also the undivided district of Mymensingh minus a part of it which he gave to another Afghan ally, 'Uthmān Khān. The territory thus indicated was not however static; it seems to have expanded or contracted in accordance as he succeeded in pushing back the Mughals or withdrew from an advanced position. Also, he maintained a number of allies under his protective wing, allowing them to have possession of some parts of the territory. The heartland of his power was, however, around the present cities of Dacca and Narayanganj, with his headquarters at Khizirpur, a place about one mile north of the latter town. At times, he had also his headquarters at Egarasindhu in Mymensingh, a fact which only underlines the fluctuating nature of his struggles against the Mughals and which, in subsequent times, has been the cause of some academic debate about the exact location of his headquarters.

#### IV: THE MUGHAL WAR IN EAST BENGAL

Arter having captured Ghorāghāt Shāhbāz Khān marched towards east Bengal early in 1584. 'Īsā Khān, along with Ma'ṣūm

Khān Kābulī, appear to have been in Kuch Bihar at that time, collecting and organizing the Afghans who had gone over there. Shāhbāz Khān could therefore arrive almost without opposition as far as Dacca itself. He then marched through Khizirpur, occupied Sunārgāon and plundered Katrābhu, the home of 'Īsā Khān. From there the Mughal general proceeded up the river Lakhyā upto Egarasindhu in Mymensingh, and entrenched himself at Tok, opposite Egarasindhu on the western bank of the Brahmaputra. Here the combined forces of 'Īsā Khān and Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī opposed the Mughals. It seems that 'Īsā Khān had allowed the latter to advance well inside his territories and the river intersected terrain so that he could fight them at the time and place of his choice. Accordingly one day when the Mughal forces came out of their entrenched position in a reconnoitering expedition at Bajitpur, 'Īsā Khān suddenly attacked them. The Mughal forces were totally routed, and their general Tarsun Khān was captured and killed. Shāhbāz Khān found himself all of a sudden practically beleaguered at Tok where he was obliged to stay inactive for about seven months. He did not dare engage in an open confrontation with 'Īsā Khān. In the meantime rains and floods set in making matters immeasurably worse for him. There appeared signs of dissensions and disaffection in his camp which was further heightened by his imperious attitude and inordinate pride. In that situation the Afghans in one night cut the Brahmaputra embankment at 15 places, flooded the Mughal camp and launched a vigorous attack on it. It was with great difficulty and much hard fighting that Shāhbāz Khān could repulse the attack. About the same time 'Īsā Khān also started the offensive from the Dacca side and captured the Mughal *Thānadār* posted there.<sup>1</sup> In great distress Shāhbāz Khān fell back on Bhowal, half-way towards Dacca. There on 30 September 1584 'Īsā Khān attacked him with force and completely defeated the Mughals. Shāhbāz Khān just managed to escape with his life towards Tanda, leaving behind all his equipage and accumulations and a large number of his men as prisoners. Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī followed up this success by occupying the country upto Sherpur, Bogra; while other columns

<sup>1</sup> Ak., III, 645-651, 658-660.

of the Afghans raided upto Malda city. Shāhbāz Khān withdrew further westward into Bihar. 'Īsā Khān and Ma'sūm Khān's operations were indirectly helped by Qutlū Khān of Orissa who kept a section of the Mughal forces under Wazīr Khān busy in the south-west near Burdwan.

On coming to know about this disastrous result of Shāhbāz Khān's east Bengal expedition Akbar sent strong directives to his Bihar officers to concert measures with Shāhbāz Khān for suppressing 'Īsā Khān. With the Bihar officers' support and fresh troops, therefore, Shāhbāz Khān returned to Tanda on 28 December 1584 and resumed the offerisive against Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī early in 1585. The latter now withdrew from Sherpur and went to Faridpur (Fathabād). This did not, however, clear the northern district for the Mughals; for a group of Qāqshāls under their leader Dastam Qāqshāl had by that time also joined hands with Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī. A Mughal contingent had therefore to be sent against Dastam Qāqshāl who, being unable to withstand them at last withdrew towards Shāhzādpūr in Pabna district.<sup>1</sup> It appears that Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī proceeded from Faridpur towards west Bengal, presumably to combine forces with Qutlū Khān. On 31 March 1585, however, he was defeated in a naval engagement near Tribeni, Hugli, by the Mughal commanders Wazīr Khān and Ṣādiq Khān. But this success of the Mughals was more than counterbalanced by their defeat at Tajpur, in west Dinajpur, at the hand of a rebel leader, Tāhir Ilanchaq. At the same time Tarkhan Dīwāna, another rebel commander, raided upto the suburbs of Tanda itself; while yet another Afghan general, Yūsuf-bin-Mitti (son of Dā'ūd's general Mitti who had been murdered by Khān Jahān<sup>2</sup>) defeated another Mughal contingent in an encounter near the capital (Tanda) and cut off Ḥabīb 'Alī, son of the Mughal general Muhibb 'Alī Rohtāsī. These set-backs of the Mughals were intensified by mutual dissensions and jealousies in their ranks which prevented any concerted action on their part. In disgust Akbar separated the Bengal and Bihar commands, giving the former to Ṣādiq Khān, and the latter to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 672-674.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 265.

Shāhbāz Khān which in effect meant a disapproval of the latter's conduct of affairs in Bengal. Shāhbāz Khān therefore immediately left Bengal with his troops and followers. This measure did not improve matters much for the Mughals, however. On the contrary, the depletion of troops encouraged the Afghans of Orissa to renew their pressure upon Burdwan, while Dastam Qāqshāl returned from Pabna and laid siege to Ghorāghāt. By the end of the year Ṣādiq Khān, assisted by Wazīr Khān, succeeded in holding in check the Afghans on the Burdwan frontier and also in warding off Dastam Qāqshāl's attack on Ghorāghāt;<sup>1</sup> but the overall results of the Mughal campaigns of 1585 were no brighter than those of the previous years; and almost the whole of Bengal, with the exception of a northern strip from Tanda to Ghorāghāt and a western slice from Tanda to Burdwan remained outside the Mughals' jurisdiction. Akbar's emphatic orders for suppressing 'Īsā Khān and the other Afghans in Bengal remained far from realized. In fact, taking advantage of the Mughals' weakness 'Īsā Khān even put off the peace negotiations which he appears to have opened earlier by sending back the guns and elephants which he had captured from Shāhbāz Khān in the previous year.

By this time Akbar came to realize the futility of the methods followed by his generals; for the enemies were scattered in all directions, yet acting in concert with one another, with the result that if the Mughal army advanced in one direction, their opponents created troubles in another direction and recovered the lost ground. The pattern of warfare seemed to be an unending process. Hence a change of policy on the part of the Mughals was called for. This was indeed reflected in Akbar's next moves. In 1586 he again transferred Shāhbāz Khān from Bihar to Bengal with instructions, as it appears, to isolate and separate the enemies from one another. Thus the first thing which the governor did this time was to adopt a soft attitude to both 'Īsā Khān in east Bengal and Qutlū Khān in Orissa with a view to isolating Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī from them. A peace was made with 'Īsā Khān which virtually left him free to enjoy his dominion without any

<sup>1</sup> *Ak.*, III, 675, 693-98.



interference from the Mughals in lieu of his having agreed to restore the territories which he had captured from the previous governor Šādiq Khān. Similarly Qutlū Khān was also left alone to enjoy his freedom in Orissa. These diplomatic moves produced the desired results. Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī, feeling himself isolated from his allies, showed an inclination for peace and sent his son to Akbar's court as a gesture of compromise. Akbar asked Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī to leave the country and to go to Makka on pilgrimage. This, however, he did not do. It appears that Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī's intentions in making the peaceful gestures were only to gain time in view of the new policy of Shāhbāz Khān. Nor were 'Īsā Khān and Qutlū Khān unaware of the fact that the peace was only a stop-gap measure. Nevertheless it offered them a much-needed respite for consolidating their position. That the peace of 1586 left 'Īsā Khān completely free in his dominion is well attested by the English traveller Ralph Fitch who visited Sunārgāon that very year. Among other things Fitch noted: "...the chief king of all these countries is called Isacan ['Īsā Khān], and he is the chief of all the other kings, and is a great friend to the Christians."<sup>1</sup>

Nor did the Mughals intend the peace to be a permanent arrangement with either 'Īsā Khān or Qutlū Khān. Thus, after these diplomatic moves were completed and the nominal submission of Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī was obtained, Shāhbāz Khān was recalled from Bengal in 1587 and Sa'id Khān was posted there. Similarly the Bihar governor was replaced by Mānsingh. Henceforth the Mughal policy was to deal with their enemies one by one. Sa'id Khān, under instructions from Akbar continued to maintain peaceful relations with 'Īsā Khān, while Mānsingh was specifically entrusted with the task of subjugating the Afghans of Orissa. Hitherto military operations against the Afghans in the east and central Bengal had necessarily involved the Mughals in hostilities with the Afghans in Orissa and there were thus almost invariably at least two fronts to fight against. The new policy was intended to avert that situation, and, as will be noted presently, it worked well for the Mughals. Whether 'Īsā Khān and Qutlū Khān

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *J.A.S.B.*, 1874, No. 3, 210.

could understand the implications of the Mughal moves is not definitely known. Even if they did, their peculiar geographical positions, the rather advanced age of Qutlū Khān, and the existence of a number of other chiefs in between their respective territories, militated against their effective cooperation and combination as a united front against the Mughals.

#### V: SUBJUGATION OF THE ORISSA AFGHANS

The first three years of Mānsingh's viceroyalty in Bihar from 1587 to 1590 were mainly occupied in suppressing some petty chiefs in south and southwestern Bihar, such as Puran Mal of Gidhur, Sangrām Singh of Kharagpur (near Monghyr) and Ananta Chero of Gayā district, who had gained prominence in those regions during the absence of any regular government over the territory since the coming of the Mughals. Their subjugation was a preliminary step for Mānsingh to turn his attention to Orissa. Having accomplished that task he embarked upon the Orissa campaign early in 1590. At his request the Bengal governor sent a well-equipped artillery force to join the Bihar forces. With this combined army Mānsingh first crossed into Bengal and then advanced through Burdwan and the north-western part of Hugli district till he reached Midnapur district which was then the frontier of the Afghan dominion of Orissa. Qutlū Khān, being then on his death-bed, could not take the field himself, but sent his forces under the able commander Bahādur Kuruh to oppose the Mughals. The first encounter between the two forces took place on 21 May 1590 near Raipur. The Mughal army was beaten back with heavy losses, some of their commanders like Biku Rathor, Mahesh Dās and Nāru Charan were killed. Mānsingh's son Jagat Singh narrowly escaped from the field and was just saved from capture by the Afghans because of the assistance of Vīr Hambīr, a local zamindar of Vishnupur in Bankura district. This first reverse made Mānsingh cautious, and he now began to employ both diplomacy and force to accomplish his object. Vīr Hambīr's example and Mānsingh's own Rājputana experiences suggested the advantage of first winning over the local Hindu chiefs and utilizing them against the Afghans. This Mānsingh did with

conspicuous success in course of time.

Mānsingh's immediate task was however immensely facilitated by Qutlū Khān's death only ten days after the battle of Raipur. He was the heart and soul of the Afghan resistance in Orissa and his death practically meant the end of it. He was succeeded on the throne by his young son Nāsir Khān who, under the advice of the old *wazīr* Khwāja 'Īsā, made terms with the Mughal viceroy on 15 August 1590 by surrendering 150 elephants and the district of Puri including the temple of Jagannāth to the direct rule of the Mughals. Nāsir Khān also agreed to have the *khutba* read and coins struck in Akbar's name.<sup>1</sup> After this unexpected success Mānsingh returned to Bihar.

Thus ended the first phase of Mānsingh's Orissa expedition. Nāsir Khān appears to have concluded the peace only to gain some time. At any rate, the old *wazīr* Khwāja 'Īsā died shortly afterwards and thus freed from his control Nāsir Khān asserted independence. He captured the Puri district from its Mughal officer and then launched an attack on Vīr Hambīr (of Bankura) for his treacherous role against the Afghans. At this turn of the events Mānsingh undertook another expedition against Orissa in November 1591. Sa'īd Khān, the Bengal viceroy, joined him with the Bengal forces, while Vīr Hambīr organized the local Hindu landholders in favour of the Mughals and acted as the vanguard of the expeditionary force. The Mughal army advanced upto the borders of the Jaleswar district when they were opposed by the Afghans. For about three months the two armies stood face to face, with occasional talks for peace and almost daily skirmishes. At last on 10 April 1592 the decisive battle between the two sides took place at Benapur, near Jaleswar. The Afghans fought with uncommon bravery and were initially on the point of victory; but they were ultimately overwhelmed by sheer numbers of their enemies and were forced to retire from the field after having lost three hundred of their men.<sup>2</sup> Mānsingh followed up this success by advancing upon Jaleswar on the following day. The Afghans retreated further into the interior of Orissa. From Jaleswar

<sup>1</sup> *Al.*, III, 870-880.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 933-937.

Mānsingh marched southwards, "accepting the submission of the local zamindars" and winning over two other Hindu chiefs, the Tilā Rājā near Kalkalghāti and Rām Chandra Dev of the Khurda locality. The Afghans made their last stand in the fort of Sarangarh (in the Cuttack district). With the assistance of his new allies Mānsingh invested the fort which, after a determined resistance, capitulated in June 1592. Qutlu Khān's three sons surrendered to Mānsingh. Of the other Afghan chiefs 'Uthmān Khān and Sulaimān Khān, Qutlu Khān's nephews, together with three others, were induced to retire to Bengal on Mānsingh's promise to assign them suitable *jāgīrs* in Faridpur. Mānsingh did not however keep this promise and on a second thought summoned them to attend his camp in Orissa. At this they rose in rebellion and raided the country upto Hugli. Being repulsed from that place they withdrew towards Bhusna (northern Jessore). There Chānd Rāi, a son of 'Isā Khān's ally, Kedār Rāi, treacherously attempted to capture them by inviting them to a dinner. They foiled the attempt, killed Chānd Rai, plundered the Bhusna fort in February 1593 and then made off with the booty to join 'Isā Khān Masnad-i-'Alā. The latter welcomed them in his dominion and granted 'Uthmān a part of his territory in Mymensingh. 'Uthmān Khān proved himself a faithful ally till the end of his life. The subjugation of Orissa was however complete this time. As a measure of pacification Mānsingh granted a number of Afghans *jāgīrs* in that country and then returned to Bihar with the three sons of Qutlu Khān. With them Mānsingh went to Akbar's court in February 1594.

#### VI: RENEWAL OF THE MUGHAL WAR AGAINST 'ISĀ KHĀN

The Afghan power in Orissa thus broken, Akbar now transferred Mānsingh to Bengal to accomplish the task of subjugating the Bengal Afghans under 'Isā Khān. Sa'id Khān, the Bengal governor, was posted in Bihar. Mānsingh arrived in Bengal in the middle of 1594 and immediately began preparations for resuming the offensive against 'Isā. As preparatory steps Mānsingh sent a few reconnoitering expeditions towards the north and the south and also transferred the capital from Tanda to

Rajmahal situated on the Bihar side of the river system, on the specific ground that it was safer from attack by the Afghan river flotillas. The new capital was given the name of Akbarnagar. One of the reconnoitering expeditions under Himmat Singh, Mānsingh's son, captured the Bhusna fort (north Jessore) from the Afghans in April 1595. At the end of the rainy season Mānsingh started on his east Bengal expedition from Akbarnagar in December 1595 proceeding by way of north Bengal. Arriving at Sherpur Murcha (Bogra) he halted there for the rainy season of 1596 and built a mud fort there which he named Selimnagar, after Prince Selim, Akbar's son.

‘Īsā Khān did not sit idle in the face of this danger. He made all possible preparations and organized his allies for defence. Of the latter, who cooperated with him in this second phase of his struggle against the Mughals, the most prominent were ‘Uthmān Khān and Sulaimān, the newly arrived Afghan leaders from Orissa, both of whom were nephews of the late Qutlū Khān. Ma’sūm Khān Kābulī, the rebel Mughal officer who had temporarily suspended hostilities against the Mughals also joined ‘Īsā Khān. Another chief, Kedār Rāi, who appears to have originally controlled over some parts of Jessore, but later on settled near Vikrampur of Dacca, also made common cause with ‘Īsā Khān and remained his faithful ally till his death.

As soon as Mānsingh had left the capital and proceeded towards north Bengal, the Afghan leader Sulaimān Khān and Kedār Rāi advanced from the south, expelled the Mughal officer from the Bhusna fort and recaptured it. Mānsingh sent an expedition under his son Durjan Singh who, after a very hard fighting, succeeded in recovering the fort. Sulaimān Khān died in course of the siege of the fort by the Mughal forces, while Kedār Rāi, being wounded, fled to ‘Īsā Khān.<sup>1</sup> The latter now planned to advance with his war-boats and invest the Mughals at Sherpur where they were halting for the rainy season. Accompanied by Ma’sūm Khān Kābulī ‘Īsā Khān arrived with a large river flotilla within 24 miles of Mānsingh's camp, but the water level of the river fell suddenly so that they were obliged to withdraw

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1043, 1059.

downstream. As the season improved Mānsingh sent an advance cavalry force under Himmat Singh to track down the Afghans. The latter had by that time disappeared into the jungly tracts of Egarasindhu (Mymensingh). Finding no trace of the enemies and in disgust Himmat Singh showed his heroism by plundering the open country and the civil population.<sup>1</sup>

The difference in tactics of the two sides only reflect their strength respectively in land and naval forces. While the Mughals were definitely superior in cavalry and land forces generally, 'Īsā Khān and his allies were definitely better off in the naval arm and wanted to engage their enemies in river warfare. Another strategy employed by both the sides was to gain control over the northern state of Kuch Bihar. As noted earlier, it proved to be the refuge of many defeated Afghans and Mughal rebels, and it could now be used for harassing Mānsingh from the rear. In fact 'Īsā Khān's next move was in that direction. The task was somewhat facilitated by a domestic quarrel between the Kuch Bihar ruler Lakshmī Nārāyan and his cousin Raghudev who disputed the former's succession to the throne. As Lakshmī Nārāyan cultivated friendly relations with the Mughal authorities, 'Īsā Khān lent support to Raghudev. With this support Raghudev attacked Lakshmī Nārāyan who thereupon sought Mānsingh's protection. The latter marched to the aid of his ally, arriving in Kuch Bihar in December 1596. There he cemented the alliance by marrying Lakshmī Nārāyan's sister. Raghudev withdrew at the approach of the Mughal army; but 'Īsā Khān's object was realized. Mānsingh had been kept busy in the north during the dry winter season of 1596-97. And as soon as Mānsingh withdrew from Kuch Bihar, Raghudev once again advanced into that territory with 'Īsā Khān's support, and once again Mānsingh had to proceed to the aid of his ally and brother-in-law. This process of advance and retreat by Raghudev was repeated several times in the course of which he once found himself confronted with the Mughal army and was defeated in May 1597 and again retreated. But Mānsingh had to spend the rainy season of 1597 also in Sherpur. In the meantime he lost his son Himmat Singh who died of cholera in March 1597. It

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1063.

was after having spent rather fruitlessly two years at Sherpur that Mānsingh at last, at the end of the rainy season of that year, sent an expedition under his son Durjan Singh to strike at 'Īsā Khān's base at Katrabhu near Dacca. The Mughal army was shown the way by a discontented relative of 'Īsā Khān's who had turned hostile. 'Īsā Khān and Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī came out with their full land forces and river flotilla, and on 5 September 1597 surrounded the Mughal army about 12 miles from Vikrampur and inflicted a severe defeat upon them. Durjan Singh, the commander of the Mughal forces, and many of his men were killed in the action; and a large number of them were taken prisoners. The rest fled helter-skelter towards north Bengal.

Thus Mānsingh's much prepared expedition against 'Īsā Khān ended more disastrously than that of his predecessor Shāhbāz Khān. After this failure, and particularly the loss of his two able sons, the Mughal viceroy was naturally in no mood to undertake another expedition immediately against 'Īsā Khān. The latter had also grown old enough and was desirous to live in peace if only he was left alone in his dominion, as was indeed the terms and purport of the peace concluded with Shāhbāz Khān. Accordingly he set free the Mughal prisoners and also suspended his attack upon the Kuch Bihar king. The Mughal official circles were only happy to interpret these moves of his as his willingness to submit to the Mughal emperor; but no actual agreement did actually take place. Mānsingh begged Akbar, however, to allow him to stay at Ajmer and govern Bengal by a deputy. The prayer was granted and Mānsingh left Bengal in the following year (1598). His grandson Mahā Singh (son of Jagat Singh who died of heavy drinking) came to Bengal, accompanied by Pratāp Singh, another son of Mānsingh, to act in his behalf. About a year after Mānsingh's departure from Bengal 'Īsā Khān died in September 1599.

Thus throughout his life 'Īsā Khān maintained his independence against the Mughal onslaughts, leading the Afghan resistance in Bengal. There is no substance of truth in the tradition referred to earlier in this chapter that he had a personal combat with Mānsingh, that afterwards he accompanied the Mughal

general to Agra where Akbar granted him titles and estates. In fact Mānsingh had never advanced up to Dacca, had never personally met 'Īsā Khān and had returned from Bengal rather discomfitted and bereaved. That 'Īsā Khān had not submitted to the Mughal authorities is also indisputably shown by the further prolonged warfares which the latter had to wage in order to establish their sway over east Bengal.



# CHAPTER XV

## MŪSĀ KHĀN MASNAD-I-'ALĀ AND THE BĀRA BHUIYĀNS

### I: THE BĀRA BHUIYĀNS

On 'Īsā Khān's death his eldest son Mūsa Khān took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal Afghan confederacy. He is mentioned more frequently in the contemporary sources as the leader of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* or Twelve Landed Chiefs. His father 'Īsā Khān is also sometimes described as such; but neither in connection with him nor with that of Mūsa Khān are the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* specifically named and identified. The allies who fought on 'Īsā Khān's side against the Mughals have been mentioned in the previous chapter. Their number is by no means twelve. Yet Abū al-Faḍl and Mirzā Nathan—the latter personally fought against Mūsa Khān and has left for us the most detailed and the best contemporary account of the Mughal campaigns in east Bengal—are rather unequivocal about the term "twelve" (دوازده).<sup>1</sup> The chiefs and *zamindars* who allied themselves with Mūsa Khān have of course been mentioned by Mirzā Nathan,<sup>2</sup> but their number appears to be more than twelve, although it is to this group that he generally refers as the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* and depicts Mūsa Khān as their leader. The contemporary or near-contemporary European sources also speak of the number "twelve", but leave the identification equally vague or even confusing. Thus the Portuguese missionary historian Du Jarric, writing on the basis of letters sent by the Jesuit missionaries from Bengal in 1599, observes:

"This country of Bengala, which comprises about two hundred leagues of sea-coast, was inhabited partly by native Bengalis, who are generally Pagans, partly by Saracenes, for the most part Patans or Parthians [Persians], who, having been driven from the Kingdom of Mogor [Mughal] which they had seized upon, withdrew to this country, where they established themselves under the government of a king of theirs; shortly after, however, the Mogors attacked them, and, having killed their king and the chief of their leaders, they took themselves possession of the country. They did not keep it long, however; the twelve Lords, the

<sup>1</sup> Ak., III, 648; also note at p. 799 of B.G. Vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, 295-298.

governors of the twelve kingdoms, which the said king of the Patans possessed, leagued together, dispossessed the Mogors, and usurped each the state which they governed; so much so that they are now sovereign lords and acknowledge no one above them. Yet they do not call themselves kings, though they consider themselves such, but Boyons, which means perhaps the same as Princes. All the Patans and native Bengalis obey these Boyons: three of them are Gentiles, namely those of Chandecan [upper Jessore], of Siripur [Vikrampur, Dacca], and of Bacla [Barisal]. The others are Saracens;...."<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere Du Jarric further writes that the "great Mogor" [Akbar] after having attacked and killed the Afghan king Dā'ūd "left the government of that kingdom [Bengal] in the hands of twelve persons, who plotting secretly against him subdued those of Mogor, and are at present very powerful lords, especially those of Siripur and Chandecan; but above all the Masandolin or Maasudalin, [Masnad-i-'Alā], as some call him..... Of these twelve Lords nine are Mahometans, which much retards the progress of the faith."<sup>2</sup> Du Jarric thus speaks of the "twelve lords", mentioning particularly that three of them were "Gentiles" or Hindus. This once again is not correct, for the other contemporary sources supply us with more than three Hindu names. His statement in one place that the twelve *Bhuiyāns* were the twelve governors appointed by the Patan or Afghan king, and then his another statement indicating that the twelve chiefs were those whom Akbar had left in charge of the "kingdom", are apparently contradictory. Perhaps this confusion is caused by the combination of the Mughal army officers' rebellion in the east with the Afghan resistance in Bengal, as related in the previous chapter. In any case, Du Jarric does not go much further than the Mughal historians in clearly identifying the twelve *Bhuiyāns*. Another European authority who makes specific reference to the "twelve" *Bhuiyāns* is the Spanish monk Sebastien Manrique who stayed in India between 1628 and 1641, that is some twenty years after the final suppression of the *Bhuiyāns* by the Mughals, and visited some parts of Hugli and Orissa. He states that the twelve *Bhuiyāns* were those of: 1. Bengala; 2. Angelim [Hijli]; 3. Ourixa

<sup>1</sup> The French edition of Du Jarric, *Bovrdeavs*, 1614, Vol. III, 826-827, quoted and translated in *J.A.S.B.*, November, 1913, Vol. IX, No. 10, N.S., 437-438.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.

[Orissa]; 4. Jassor; 5. Chandecan; 6. Midinimpur [Midnapur]; 7. Catrabo [Katrabuh, near Dacca]; 8. Bacala; 9. Solimanvas [Faridpur]; 10. Buluva [Noakhali]; 11. Dacca and 12. Rajamol [Rajmahal].<sup>1</sup> This territorial identification of the twelve *Bhuiyāns* extending over the whole of Bengal and Orissa is obviously too vague and generalized, and is somewhat at variance with the information contained in the Mughal histories which limit the *Bhuiyāns* rather to east Bengal. Perhaps Manrique's description tends to emphasize the fact that the Afghan opposition to the Mughals was organized both in Bengal and Orissa, as discussed in the last chapter. There are also other European references to the subject, but in no way more specific. One of them, dated 1605, makes the significant observation that the twelve *Bhuiyāns* "ruled over all the low lands watered by the Ganges".<sup>2</sup>

This vagueness in the contemporary and near-contemporary sources has been the main difficulty in properly identifying the twelve *Bhuiyāns* of Bengal who fought against the Mughals; although a good deal of discussion has taken place on the subject.<sup>3</sup> Early in the nineteenth century a new dimension was added to it when Buchanan pointed out that there are references to *Bāra Bhuiyāns* in the history of Assam also;<sup>4</sup> and early in the twentieth century this fact was emphasized by a European historian of Assam who observed: "It is not clear why the number twelve should always be associated with them, both in Bengal and Assam. Whenever they are enumerated, twelve persons are always mentioned, but the actual names vary..... It seems to have been the practice in this part of India for Kings to appoint twelve advisers or governors. Nar Nārāyan had twelve ministers of state; twelve chiefs or *dolois* administered the hilly portions of the Rāja of Jaintia's dominions, and there were twelve State Councillors in Nepal."<sup>5</sup> The hint was developed shortly afterwards by another writer who drew attention to the existence of such twelve chiefs

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 439; also *J.A.S.B.*, 1875, No. 2, 181.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1913, 438.

<sup>3</sup> See for a good bibliographical note on previous discussions on the subject N.K. Bhattachali, "Bengal Chiefs' struggle for independence in the reign of Akbar and Jahangir", *B.P.P.*, 1928, 25-30.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, *Eastern India*, II, 612.

<sup>5</sup> E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1906, 37.

or state councillors in other places like Arakan and Malabar and added that there are indications that the ancient Hindu tradition attached some sacredness to the number *twelve*.<sup>1</sup> One outcome of this trend in the discussion was to attach less importance to the term "Twelve" and to take it for an indefinite number. This latter thesis was stressed by a Bengali writer, S.C. Mitra, who stated: "'Twelve' is a sacred number to the Hindus and the assemblage of 12 Chiefs is a peculiar feature of India. Twelve subordinate Chiefs are spoken of from very ancient times. In Manu-Samhita, the emperor has around him 12 Chiefs holding different relations with him. (Manu. Chap. VII. Verses 155, 156.). The powerful kings spoken of in Old Bengali Literature sat in their courts surrounded by 12 Chieftains. In Assam also, like Bengal, Twelve Chiefs or ministers were essential for the constitution of a State..... In Arrakan and Siam also, the coronation of a King was accompanied by the installation of the 12 Chiefs under him..... There is no rule that only twelve persons are to take part in it. The expression 'Bāra Bhuiyān' also appears to be a similar one. An indefinite number of Bhuiyāns obtained ascendancy in Bengal and they were therefore called 'Bāra Bhuiyān'."<sup>2</sup> This conclusion was supported in general also by the latest serious writer on the subject, N.K. Bhattachali, though he held that it was not because of the sacredness of the number 'twelve', but because of the instance of Assam immediately previous to the advance of the Mughals on Bengal that the Chiefs who rose there came to be called *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. "In Assam history", he writes, "we find that whenever the overland [overlord] disappeared or became weak, a number of petty Chiefs arose and became independent. Their common appellation was Bāra-Bhuiyān. When in 1576, with the fall of Daud, conditions became similar in Bengal, the suppression of the Bāra-Bhuiyāns of Assam by Bisva Simha was still fresh in everybody's memory. And thus *the independent Chiefs that arose in Bengal promptly received the name of Bāra-Bhuiyāns on the analogy of Assam*. This appears to me to be the most plausible

<sup>1</sup> Rev. H. Hosten, "The Twelve Bhuiyas or Landlords of Bengal", *J.A.S.B.*, 1913, November, No. 10, N.S., 445-447.

<sup>2</sup> S.C. Mitra, *Jasohar-Khulnār Itihās* (Bengali text, History of Jessore and Khulna) Part II, B.E. 1329 (1922), 20-22, quoted and translated by N.K. Bhattachali, *op. cit.*, 30.

explanation of the nomenclature."<sup>1</sup> This explanation, though "plausible", is only an assumption without any direct historical evidence in its support. As will be indicated presently, the figure "twelve" is not perhaps just imaginary and that it has most probably some relevance to the number of units in the anti-Mughal confederacy under the leadership of 'Īsā Khān and Mūsa Khān.

Apart from the ambiguity about the number, a proper understanding of the character and role of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* has been blurred by the attempt of some scholars to find models for subsequent measures or ideals in the history of those chiefs. Thus some of the British administrator-writers sought a justification or parallel of the Permanent Settlement of 1793 (whereby a class of rather upstart *zamindars* was called into being) in the existence of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* and other *zamindars* in the pre-Mughal and Mughal times. The pattern of thought was set in motion by C.W.B. Rouse during the debate over the Permanent Settlement.<sup>2</sup> And Dr. J. Wise, who was the first scholar to attempt a serious study of the history of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*, and that also during another period of intense debate and public discussions in the early seventies of the nineteenth century about the rights and titles of the Bengal *zamindars*, avowedly drew his inspiration from Rouse's writings.<sup>3</sup> The tradition collected by Wise about 'Īsā Khān has been discussed in the last chapter. Here it would be worthwhile to note Wise's characterization of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. Speaking about their position he says: "... we learn that they were independent of each other; that their rank and jurisdiction were hereditary; that they retained armed men and war-boats; that they remitted to the governor the revenue of their districts; and that they yielded a general obedience to the ruling monarch at Dihli. In some respects they were Jāgirdārs and Chaklahdārs, but they

<sup>1</sup> B.P.P., 1928, 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> C.W.B. Rouse, *Dissertation concerning the Landed Property of Bengal*, London, 1791.

<sup>3</sup> J.A.S.B., 1874, No. 3, 198. Dr. Wise writes: "My attention was first directed to this subject by the perusal of a work which accidentally fell into my hands. It was published at the time that the controversy regarding the Permanent Settlement was raging fiercely among the English officials, and one of its chief objects was to determine who were the persons actually in possession of the lands of Bengal at the time the country was finally reduced to the authority of emperor Akbar. Mr. Rouse ascertained that at the period referred to Bengal was held by twelve "Bhuiyan", and that five of these ruled over southern and eastern Bengal."

more closely resembled the Zamīndārs of later times."<sup>1</sup> One can easily see how skilfully Wise tailored his description to fit the "Zamīndārs of later times", that is, under the Permanent Settlement. There was no question of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*, who fought under 'Īsā Khān and Mūsā Khān against the Mughals, having "remitted to the governor the revenue of their districts", or of having "yielded a general obedience to the ruling monarch at Dihli." If such had ever been the position, there would have been far less talk about the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* in contemporary as well as subsequent times.

No less confusion has been created, as indicated earlier, by the nationalist writings about the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*, specially in the early years of the twentieth century. One of the upshots of such writings was the idealization and glorification of Prātāpāditya of Jessore who, by all reliable accounts, appears to have followed a policy of least resistance to the Mughals. The halo created round that inappropriate hero has of course been dispelled by the progress of time and research,<sup>2</sup> but the legacy of the nationalist approach still lingers in the tendency to conjure up all the independent and semi-independent chiefs of the time in connection with the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*.

A little careful analysis of the contemporary sources, both Mughal and European, enables us to identify the following distinguishing features of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. (a) All the sources agree in stating in one form or another that the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* were those who rose in Bengal after the fall of the Afghan ruler Dā'ūd Khān and spearheaded the Afghan resistance to the advance of the Mughals. (b) Secondly, they were allied with one another forming a sort of anti-Mughal confederacy. (c) Thirdly, they were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>2</sup> The mistake about Prātāpāditya was first clearly pointed out by Leo Faulkner in an article captioned "Where Prātāpāditya reigned", published in the *Calcutta Review*, 1920, 186 ff., and it was forcefully supported eight years later by N.K. Bhattasali who wrote: "The omission of the well-known name of Prātāpāditya will surprise many of my readers. As far as I have been able to understand and sift historical evidence, I have obtained no proofs to show that Prātāpāditya ever fought with the forces of Akbar. Prātāpāditya of Jessore and Anantamānikya of Bhulua appear to me to have fought the Mughals for the first and last time in 1612 and 1613 in the reign of Jahāngir when they had no other recourse but to fight, and they went down in the contest. Mukundarām of Bhushnā never fought with the Mughals and Rām Chandra of Baclā submitted on the first onslaught." — *B.P.P.*, 1928, 33.

persistent in their hostility towards the Mughals. (d) They followed the lead of 'Īsā Khān and, after him, of his son Mūsā Khān; and (e) they belonged generally to eastern Bengal which was the main theatre of their resistance. Sebastien Manrique of course spreads the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* over the whole of Bengal and Orissa; but, as pointed out earlier, his account is not quite contemporary, and he makes an obviously ambiguous geographical enumeration without mentioning any particular personal names. Keeping in view these characteristics it may be stated that the other individuals who are found to have carved out an independent existence in their respective localities by taking advantage of the troublous and unsettled conditions of the time but who do not otherwise satisfy all the above mentioned characteristics, should not be counted among the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. Thus Shams Khān and Salīm Khān, two powerful chiefs who established themselves in south-west Bengal and were also anti-Mughal in their policies, but who did not follow the lead of 'Īsā Khān or Mūsā Khān, should not be grouped with the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. Similarly Pratāpāditya of Jessore, his son-in-law Ramchandra of Bāklā (Barisal), and the latter's adversary Ananta Mānikya of Bhulūā (Noakhali), who did never really wage a war of resistance against the Mughals but were rather the earliest to submit and cooperate with them, should not be ranked with the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. Pratāpāditya, Rām Chandra and Ananta Mānikya did not also follow the lead of 'Īsā Khān and Mūsā Khān, nor was there a confederate unity between them, Rām Chandra and Ananta Mānikya being on hostile terms with each other. They and the other *zamindars* who were not allied with Mūsā Khān have been mistakenly grouped with the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* for the reasons indicated above, and also perhaps because the descendants of some of those *zamindars* subsequently identified themselves for various reasons with the historic *Bāra Bhuiyāns*.

That the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* against whom the Mughals fought belonged to east Bengal and were only those chiefs who were allied with Mūsā Khān (and also with 'Īsā Khān) is sufficiently clear from the account of Mirzā Nathan, who personally took part in the campaigns against them and kept a diary-like and

day-to-day record of the military proceedings, and who, as such, is the best contemporary authority on the subject. To illustrate this, it is necessary to anticipate some events. Thus, speaking about the arrival of the Mughal viceroy Islām Khān in Bengal and his immediate measures Mirzā Nathan states that the viceroy planned an "expedition of Bhātī [east Bengal] against Masnad-i-'Alā Mūsā Khān and the Twelve famous Bhuiyāns of Bengal and others like them".<sup>1</sup> The statement clearly shows that the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* were those who were allied with Mūsā Khān in east Bengal and that they were distinguished from the *others like them*. Indeed as a preparatory step for his east Bengal expedition Islām Khān sent a couple of expeditions against some of those *others* in south and south-west Bengal, namely, "Rāja Satrajit, son of Rāja Mukunda, Zamindar of Bhusna" and "Bīr Hāmīr, Shams Khān and Salīm Khān, Zamindars of Birbhum, Pachet and Hijli..."<sup>2</sup> The same idea is conveyed by what is recorded next about Pratāpāditya's attendance upon Islām Khān in north Bengal, after the successful expeditions against the above mentioned *zamindars*, and the former's undertaking to support and join the expedition to Bhātī against Mūsā Khān and his allies.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, narrating Islām Khān's arrival in east Bengal and his encampment at Kātāsgarh, to the west of the river Padma near Mānikganj subdivision of Dacca district, Mirza Nathan writes: "Now I shall give a short account of Masnad-i-'Alā Mūsā Khān and the Twelve Bhuiyāns. When the letter of Mādhab Rāy reached (Mūsā Khān) conveying the news of the arrival of the imperial forces at *Mohānā* of Kātāsgarh...., he (Mūsā Khān) came in great haste with all the zamindars whose names will be mentioned later on..... Mūsā Khān Masnad-i-'Alā, 'Alāu'l Khān his cousin (maternal uncle's son), 'Abdu'llah Khān and Maḥmūd Khān, the younger brothers of Mūsā Khān, Bāhādur Ghāzī, Sunā Ghāzī, Anwār Ghāzī, Shaykh Pīr, son of Hājī Bhakul, Mirzā Mu'min, Mādhav Rāy, Zamindar of Chandpratāp, Pahlwān, Zamindar of Matang and Hājī Shamsu-'ddīn Baghdādī

<sup>1</sup> B.G. I., 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.



were in Mūsā Khān's camp."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, after the defeat of Mūsā Khān at Dākcharā Islām Khān sent a despatch to Jahāngīr reporting thus: "So long Mūsā Khan, son of 'Isā Khān in alliance with the Twelve Bhuiyāns possessed the fort of Dākchara; so I sent Mirzā Nathan, son of Ihtimām Khān, and Ilahyār, son of Iftikhār Khān against that fort. The fort was conquered by the efforts and devoted work of Mirzā Nathan, and Ilahyār was in his company."<sup>2</sup> Fourthly, after Mūsā Khān's final defeat and surrender, and in connection with the expedition against 'Uthmān Khān and his brothers who still held on in Sylhet and Mymensingh, it is recorded by Mirza Nathan: "When all these numerous conquests took place and Mūsā Khān surrendered with all his brothers and the twelve Bhuiyāns, it was decided that Mūsā Khān would personally remain at the Court (of the Governor), and Maḥmūd Khān his younger brother with all the Zamindars would proceed with Shaykh Kamāl against the rebellious 'Uthmān and his brothers...."<sup>3</sup> Thus the defeat and surrender of Mūsā Khān was considered as the end of the war with the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*, and though 'Uthmān Khān was formerly his ally, he was now considered as "the rebellious 'Usmān Khān". Last but not least, it is also specifically noted by Mirza Nathan that the campaigns against Prātapāditya and Rāmchandra, of lower Jessore and Barisal respectively, were undertaken after the wars against Musa Khan and the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* had "ended satisfactorily".<sup>4</sup>

Thus the historic *Bāra Bhuiyāns* whom the Mughals fought and subdued were Mūsā Khān and his allies, and not the *others like them*. From the above mentioned list of Mirza Nathan and other references in his work Mūsā Khān and his associates and allies may be listed as follows:

*Names*

*Estates, strongholds, etc.*

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|---|--|
| 1. Masnad-i-'Alā Mūsā Khān, together with his four brothers, Dā'ūd Khān, 'Abd Allah Khān, Maḥmūd Khān and Ilyās Khān; his | Succeeded to 'Isā Khān's dominions comprising the greater parts of Dacca and |
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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

- chief officer in charge of the capital, Hājī Shams al-Dīn Baghdādī; his minister Khwāja Chānd; his admiral of the fleet 'Ādil Khān; and his cousin 'Alaul Khān.
2. (a) Bāhādūr Ghāzī;<sup>1</sup>  
 (b) Sonā Ghāzī, son of Bāhādūr Ghāzī;  
 (c) Anwār Ghāzī (most probably son of Bāhādūr Ghāzī's brother Mahtāb Ghāzī).
  3. Shaykh Pīr, son of Hājī Bhakul.
  4. (a) Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī, his son  
 (b) Mirza Mu'min, together with  
 (c) Daryā Khān, relationship not known. (The latter was killed by Mirza Mu'min for some differences between them)
  5. Kedār Rāi.<sup>2</sup>
  6. Madhu Rāi.
  7. Binod Rāi.
  8. Pahlwan.
  9. (a) 'Uthmān Khān (sometimes called Khwāja 'Uthmān), nephew of Qutlū Khān Luhānī of Orissa; his son  
 (b) Mumriz Khān; and 'Uthmān Khān's three brothers:  
 (c) Malhi,

Mymensingh districts, and part of northern Tippera.

Bhawal and Chaura, on the western bank of the Lakhyā river, in Dacca district, and Sarail, in northern Tippera—possessed a large number of war-boats.

No specific estate is mentioned in connection with him.

Pabna, with Chatmohar as their headquarters.

Vikrampur and Sripur in Dacca district. After his death his estate was under the direct control of Mūsā Khān.

Khalsi, in Pabna district.

Chāndpratāp, Manikganj subdivision, Dacca district.

Matang (north of Sarail, between the present districts of Tippera and Sylhet).

'Uthmān had his stronghold first at Bokāinagar, east of the Brahmaputra in Mymensingh district, and later on in southern Sylhet, with Uhār as a strong fort. 'Uthmān's son

<sup>1</sup> On the basis of a family record recovered and published by Stapleton in *Dacca Review*, 1911-12, 221, N.K. Bhattasali considers Fādī Ghāzī as the founder of the Ghāzī family, who had three sons - Bāhādūr, Mahtāb and Fādī. Bāhādūr had a son named Sonā Ghāzī, while Mahtāb had four sons-Nūr (or Anwār), Daulat, Aḥmad and Nūr (?). The first named son Anwār had a son named Hira. - *B.P.P.*, 1928, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Kedār Rāi is not mentioned by Mirza Nathan obviously because when he came to Bengal the former was dead.

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|---|---|
| (d) Wālī and<br>(e) Ibrāhīm   | Mumrīz Khān, together with Malhi, Wālī and Ibrāhīm were in control of Taraf, south-east of the Habiganj subdivision of Sylhet district.                                     |
| 10. (a) Anwār Khān, his brother:<br>(b) Husain Khān, with some other Afghans.         | Baniachang in Habiganj subdivision of Sylhet district. Anwar Khān is sometimes described by Mirzā Nathan as the chief of the zamindars and no less powerful than Mūsā Khān. |
| 11. (a) Bāyazīd Karrānī, his brother:<br>(b) Yā'qūb Karrānī, with some other Afghans. | Central and northern Sylhet district  |
| 12. Majlis Quth.  | Fathabād (greater part of Faridpur district). Had besides a fine cavalry and a large flotilla of war-boats under him.   |

These were the associates and allies of Mūsā Khān whom Mirza Nathan and other contemporary sources call the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. If all the names are taken singly they would definitely be far more than twelve, but they together represent twelve families or units in the confederacy, as arranged in the above list. The term *Bāra Bhuiyāns* evidently refers to the heads of the families or groups; for surely Mūsā Khān and his brothers and sons, and his officers, cannot each be regarded as one of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*. The same can be said of the Ghāzī family (No. 2), of Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī and his son (No. 4), of 'Uthmān Khān and his group (No. 9) and of Bāyazīd Karrānī and his group (No. 11). The expression *Bāra Bhuiyāns* would thus appear to be not without reference to the actual number of the confederating units. Much of the confusion and discussion about the number and identity of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* has apparently been due to the fact that the names of persons, mentioned at different places in connection with different events in the contemporary sources have not been properly collated and coordinated, and have often

been taken into account singly.<sup>1</sup> And the uncertainty thus arising about the number has also, to some extent, led to the inclusion in the list of the *Bārā Bhuiyāns* of all the other chiefs or *zamindars* who are found in existence in north, south and even west Bengal.

## II: MĀNSINGH RETURNS AND RESUMES THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE AFGHANS

As mentioned earlier, Mānsingh was away from Bengal when 'Īsā Khān died in September 1599. This was of some advantage to Mūsā Khān and his allies as it offered them a respite to get over the first shock of 'Īsā Khān's death. They knew that Mānsingh's withdrawal was only temporary and that the offensive against them would soon be resumed. Accordingly they took all possible steps to strengthen their position and to strike at the Mughals in Bengal during Mānsingh's absence. In April 1600 'Uthmān Khān along with a number of other Afghans inflicted a defeat upon the Mughal army under Mahā Singh and Pratāp Singh, Mānsingh's grandson and son respectively. This was quickly followed by a rising of the Afghans in north Orissa where their power was revived. The Mughal arms in Bengal also suffered a number of other reverses at the hands of the Afghans at different places. Early in 1601 the latter even succeeded in capturing and carrying away to eastern Bengal the Mughal provincial *Bakhshī* (Paymaster-General of the troops), 'Abd al-Razzāq. In view of these developments Mānsingh hurried back to Bengal, arriving just in time to rescue his *Bakhshī* by a swift campaign in east Bengal in February 1601. He next advanced upto Dacca and opened negotiations with Kedār Rāi for winning him over to the Mughal side. That leader however nobly refused Mānsingh's bait of imperial honour and service and remained steadfast in his alliance with Mūsā Khān. Mānsingh remained stationed at Dacca for sometime during which he led a couple of other campaigns against the Afghans. Mūsā Khān and Kedār Rai now took their stand on the eastern bank of the Ichhāmatī. On the other hand, taking advantage of Mānsingh's preoccupation in east

<sup>1</sup> Thus, for instance N.K. Bhattasali (*op. cit.* 36) counts Hajī Shams al-Dīn Baghādī, who was only an officer under Mūsā Khān, as a separate chief.

Bengal, some Afghan chiefs like Jalāl Khān and Qādī Mu'min raided north Bengal upto Malda. Mānsingh sent thither Mahā Singh who succeeded in driving out the Afghan leaders from that region after a hard contest. Qādī Mu'min died in one of the encounters.

In the meantime 'Uthmān Khān attacked the Mughal post near Bhāwāl and expelled the Mughal *thānādār* from there. At this turn of events Mānsingh marched from Dacca and inflicted an indecisive defeat upon 'Uthmān Khān who now retreated further eastward. Shortly after this another indecisive encounter took place between Mānsingh, who had managed to cross to the other side of the river Ichhāmātī, and the combined forces of Mūsā Khān and Kedār Rāi. In 1603 Kedār Rāi effected a junction with the Magh pirates in southern Bengal who now came upto Narayan-ganj and attacked the Mughals. It was with much difficulty that Mānsingh could ward off the attack. Shortly afterwards, however, Kedār Rāi joined the Maghs with his own powerful fleet and fell upon the Mughals near Vikrampur where a great battle was fought. Kedār Rāi was wounded and captured, but died before he was taken to Mānsingh. Thus passed away one of the powerful and trustworthy allies of Mūsā Khān. Before the Mughal viceroy could utilize this victory in further pressing on Mūsā Khān, however, the Mughal emperor Akbar fell seriously ill and summoned his trusted servant back to Agra in March 1605. Mānsingh remained there till the death of the emperor in October of that year. After his accession Jahāngīr sent back Mānsingh to Bengal. The latter remained in the province this time for only one year which was uneventful. After his recall there followed two equally short vicerealties, those of Qutb al-Dīn Khān Kokā, 1606-1607, and Jahāngīr Qulī Khān, 1607-1608. During their period also nothing noteworthy took place in their relationships with the Afghan chiefs. In fact during these years Mūsā Khān and his allies recouped their position and recovered the areas which had been captured by Mānsingh. In 1608 Islām Khān Chīshtī was sent as the Mughal viceroy. With him a new era in the Mughal relationships with the Afghan chiefs began.

III: ISLĀM KHĀN CHĪSHTĪ AND THE TRIUMPH OF MUGHAL  
ARMS AND DIPLOMACY, 1608-1613

Shaikh 'Ala' al-Dīn entitled Islām Khān reached Rajmahal and assumed the charge of his office early in June 1608.<sup>1</sup> He was a grandson of the famous Shaikh Salīm Chīshī and a childhood friend of the emperor Jahāngīr. The new viceroy was young and energetic, being only 38 years of age at the time of his assumption of office, and was determined to establish the Mughal authority over Bengal. He succeeded in doing this by a combination of diplomacy and careful military expeditions in the course of his five years' stay in Bengal. Immediately on his arrival he set his hand to this task. As a measure of preparation he sent away to court all those who were suspected of doubtful loyalty, particularly those of the Qāqshāls and Ma'sūm Khān Kābulī's followers who had submitted to the previous viceroys. Next, Islām Khān brought in increased forces and war-materials including guns and artillery. He was also joined, shortly after his arrival at Rajmahal, by a new *dīwān*, Abū al-Hasan, and a new admiral of the fleet, Ihtimām Khān.<sup>2</sup> The latter was also accompanied by his son, Mirzā Nathan who, besides rendering valuable military services, has left for us the most valuable and contemporary accounts of the campaigns.

The new viceroy had a good beginning; for while he had thus been making preparations in 1608 for war, Rāja Pratāpāditya of Jesore sent to him an envoy, accompanied by his son Sangrāmāditya and suitable presents, professing loyalty and promising to help the viceroy in his projected campaign against Mūsā Khān in the shape of personal service and supply of war-equipments.<sup>3</sup> Islām Khān was naturally happy to accept Pratāpāditya's submission; but in order to ensure that this was not just a diplomacy of convenience on Pratāpāditya's part asked his envoy to leave behind Sangrāmāditya to render personal service in the war. The envoy was obliged to do so. Pratāpāditya's action in fact opened

<sup>1</sup> According to Dr. M. J. Borah in *B.G.*, Chap. I., n. 10 (at p. 791-92 of Vol. II). Also Dr. S. N. Bhattacharya in *H.B.* II, 248. In describing the campaigns I have generally adopted the chronology as fixed by the latter scholar on the basis of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* of Mirza Nathan.

<sup>2</sup> *B.G.*, I., 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

up a new phase in the Mughal policy in Bengal. Islām Khān was intelligent enough to grasp its significance. Henceforth he devoted equal attention to diplomacy in order to win over as many of the chiefs and *zamindars* as possible and to utilize their services in breaking up the power of Mūsā Khān and his confederates.

Islām Khān started on his campaign towards east Bengal at the end of the rainy season of 1608, taking with him his army and the navy. On reaching Gaud he sent a force of 2000 cavalry and 4000 musketeers under Shaikh Kamāl to subdue the Afghan chiefs Shams Khān and Salīm Khan who had established themselves in Pachet and Hijli respectively (Midnapur district) in southwest Bengal.<sup>1</sup> As in the time of Mānsingh, the zamindar Bīr Hambīr of Bankura cooperated with the Mughals showing them the way into Shams Khān's territory. The latter, after a fortnight of hard fighting, was forced to submit. After his fall Salīm Khan, the other Afghan chief, realized the futility of resistance and offered his submission without fighting. In the meantime Islām Khān, proceeding from Gaud, arrived at 'Alāipur, 12 miles south-east of Putia in Rajshahi district, early in 1609. There Shaikh Kamāl met him, accompanied by Shams Khān and Salīm Khān.<sup>2</sup> The viceroy tactfully allowed both of them to retain thier territories as *jāgīrs* and exempted them from personal service. From 'Alāipur Islām Khān sent two other expeditions. One was sent under Iftikhār Khān against Rāja Satrajit of Bhusna (Jessore) whose father Mukunda had treacherously murdered the sons of the Mughal *thānādar*, Murād, and had established himself in that region. The other expedition was sent under Mirzā Nathan against Mūsā Khān's allies in Pabna, Mirzā Mu'min, Daryā Khān and Madhu Rāi. The first expedition was an easy success. Satrajit at first contemplated offering some resistance, but when the Mughal forces entered his territory (Narail, Jessore) he submitted without any fight. Islām Khān restored to him his lands and enlisted him in the Mughal service.<sup>3</sup> The second expedition under Mirza Nathan did not end so easily and proved only to be the beginning of the

<sup>1</sup> B.G., I., 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18, 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I., 18-19.

operations against Mūsā Khān himself. When Mirzā Nathan advanced with the Mughal forces towards Chatmohar, Mirzā Mu'min and his allies withdrew further into the interior of the district. Mirzā Nathan halted near Pabna town and asked Islām Khān for sending further reinforcements. In the meantime Iftikhār Khān had returned from his Jessore campaign. Hence Islām Khān sent him and Rāja Satrajit with a large force to join Mirza Nathan. Finding it impossible to face the vast Mughal forces, Mirza Mu'min, Daryā Khān and Madhu-Rāi crossed the river and joined Mūsā Khān at Sunārgāon.<sup>1</sup> Mirzā Nathan therefore returned with the forces to Islām Khān.

As the rainy season of the year (1609) was approaching, Islām Khān proceeded to Ghorāghāt (Rangpur district) to spend the season there. When at Ghorāghāt, Islām Khān received Pratāpāditya of Jessore who waited on the viceroy and promised to send 400 war-boats under his son Sangrāmāditya to join the Mughal fleet, and also undertook that at the end of the rainy season he would himself with 20000 *paiks* (foot-soldiers), 1000 cavalry and 100 war-boats launch a simultaneous attack on Mūsā Khān's possessions from the west side while the viceroy would commence his operations against him from the north.<sup>2</sup> It appears that Rāja Pratāpāditya paid this visit to the viceroy and made fresh promises of cooperating with him in his projected campaigns against Mūsā Khān mainly to get Sangrāmāditya, who had been detained at the viceroy's court, released. Sangrāmāditya was allowed to leave with his father; but Pratāpāditya, as will be seen later on, did not keep his promise. At Ghorāghāt Islām Khān received the submission also of Rājā Raghunāth, zamindar of Shushang (north-eastern border of Mymensingh). At the same time Rājā Lakshmī Nārāyan of Kuch Bihar, who had already been in alliance with the Mughals, renewed his allegiance to the viceroy. Rājā Raghunāth and Rājā Lakshminārāyan induced Islām Khān to send an expedition to Kāmrūp, which was done but which was not successful.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 28-29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.



During that rainy season an advance force was sent against Mūsā Khān's ally Binod Rāi of north-western Manikganj area. The latter, aided by Mirza Mu'min, Daryā Khān and Madhu Rāi, successfully resisted the Mughal force in that quarter. The main conflict of the season took place, however, in Faridpur. From Ghorāghāt Islām Khān had sent a strong force under his brother Shaikh Ḥabīb Allāh against Mūsā Khān's powerful ally Majlis Qutb of Fathabād (Faridpur) and had also directed Rājā Satrajit to make a simultaneous attack upon the former from the north and the west. Majlis Qutb naturally appealed to Mūsā Khān for help. The latter now directed Mirza Mu'min to leave the Manikganj front and to proceed to the help of Majlis Qutb. Mūsā Khān also sent with Mirza Mu'min a sizeable land force and a fleet of 200 war-boats. In Faridpur the Afghans offered a very tough resistance, and Mirza Mu'min made several daring attempts to dislodge Shaikh Ḥabīb Allāh, but was repulsed. Ultimately both Majlis Qutb and Mirza Mu'min were forced to withdraw from Faridpur and take shelter in Mūsā Khān's dominion.<sup>1</sup> The fall of Pabna and Faridpur, coupled with the cooperation of Pratāpāditya and Satrajit on the west side, and Raghunāth on the north-east, virtually left Mūsā Khān and his allies, now concentrated in Dacca-Mymensingh region alone, surrounded by enemies on three sides.

At the end of the rainy season of 1609 (mid-1018 H.) Islām Khān planned a double pronged attack on Mūsā Khān's position. A detachment under Shaikh Kamāl, Tukmuq Khān and Mirak Bahādur was sent direct to Dacca with instructions to repair the forts there; while Islām Khān himself with the main body of the army and the fleet proceeded along the river towards Jātrāpur, Mūsā Khān's main fortified position on the Dacca-Rajmahal river route, lying some forty miles west of Dacca town. Islām Khān entrenched himself a little upwards of Jātrāpur at a place called Kātāsgarh. Mūsā Khān sent Mirzā Mu'min, Daryā Khān and Madhu Rāi to defend Jātrāpur, and a little afterwards himself went there with his other allies. Mūsā Khān had then under him 700 war-boats, "consisting of *Kuśās, jaliyā, dhurā, sundarā, bajrā* and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

*khelnā*.”<sup>1</sup> He strengthened his position by erecting a fort at Dākcharā, on the bank of the Padma, three miles north-west of Jātrāpur, and near the Mughal encampment. It was a mud-fort but it was so quickly and strongly built that it aroused the admiration of Mirzā Nathan. “In Bengal”, he writes, “there were no ancient forts except those at Gawr, Akbarnagar *alias* Rajmahal, Ghoraghat, Dhaka, and some other places of this type; but in time of need, the boatmen quickly construct such a fort that even the expert masters are unable to build one like it within months and years. Such a fort was made, and arranging the artillery and the weapons of defence of the fort, he (Mūsā Khān) became ready for battle.”<sup>2</sup> Mūsā Khān began an immediate attack upon the Mughal position which is graphically described by Mirza Nathan as follows:<sup>3</sup>

“Mūsā Khān came with his fleet and began to fire cannon. Islām Khān was taking his dinner. The first shot broke all his utensils and crockery and killed about twenty to thirty of his servants. The second shot wounded the arm of the standard-bearer of Islām Khān, who was sitting on an elephant's back, in such a way that he was shattered to pieces along with the standard. Then a great commotion arose and this battle continued up to midday. From the high bank the Gulandāz (artillerymen) began to fire and they killed and wounded many a man of the enemy's fleet, and several of the *kuśās* were sunk by the cannon shots. Thus the son of Mādhav Rāy and the brother of Binud Rāy were sent to hell by the shots of the cannon. When the sun reached the meridian, all the Zamindars ran back to the other side of the river, and Islām Khān returned to his camp. All the officers remained in their trenches up to the next morning till Islām Khān came there according to his usual practice. Mūsā Khān again came forward and began to fire his cannon.... Every time the soldiers of the Zamindars advanced and launched an attack, the imperial army met it by a counter-attack and drove them back to a considerable distance on the bank of the river....”

After the third day's fight Mūsā Khan withdrew from his advanced position and went into his strongholds of Dākcharā and Jātrāpur. The two forces remained face to face for some time. Islām Khān next attempted to take Dākcharā by a direct assault but failed. About this time Mūsā Khan made overtures for peace which Islām Khān took to be only a manoeuvre on the former's

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

part to gain time for making better preparations for war. Accordingly while Mūsā Khān was thus busy in peace negotiations at Dākcharā, Islām Khān, in conjunction with his forces from Dacca made a surprise night attack on Jātrāpur. Māsā Khān rushed back too late to save the fort which fell in the Mughal hands in June 1610 (early 1019 H.).<sup>1</sup> Islām Khān now concentrated all his efforts to capture Dākcharā. Mūsā Khān held out for about a month and a half in the course of which a number of hotly contested naval battles took place. At last Rājā Raghunāth (of Shushang), who had in the meantime joined the Mughals with his forces, showed the latter a dried-up canal leading to the river Ichhāmatī and the rear of Mūsā Khān's fort. This canal was dug up and cleared, and on 15 July the Mughal army, backed by the navy under Mirzā Nathan and his father Ihtimām Khān succeeded in reaching the vicinity of the fort. The Mughal forces, under Mirzā Nathan's advice, "kept ready five thousand bundles of straw and five thousand basketfuls of earth, and they began their work (of filling the ditch) immediately after dusk."<sup>2</sup> The ditch was filled up by midnight when Mirzā Nathan led the final assault with his elephants and men. Mūsā Khān and his men, being thus attacked from the rear of the fort and evidently from an unexpected direction, could not long withstand the assault. Many of his men fell in the attempt to save the fort, and at last towards the end of the night he abandoned the fort and withdrew to the other side of the river Padma. "It was such a big victory", rightly boasts Mirzā Nathan, "that the age became eloquent with its praise and the people of the age offered sincere thanks to the Almighty with all their heart and soul".<sup>3</sup>

The loss of Jātrāpur and Dākcharā practically broke Mūsā Khān's back-bone. His losses in men and war-boats were heavy and his cause now appeared hopeless even to his own men. His brother Ilyās Khān gave up the struggle and submitted to the Mughals.<sup>4</sup> Islām Khān now marched to Dacca with the full force of his army and fleet and began preparations for attacking the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

centre of Mūsā Khān's power. The latter took his stand now on the eastern bank on the Lakhyā, which was then a wider and stronger river, evacuating Khizirpur and leaving the capital Sunārgāon in charge of Ḥajī Shams al-Dīn Baghdādī. Mūsā Khān's brothers 'Abd Allah Khān, Dā'ūd Khān and Maḥmūd Khān remained in charge respectively of Qadam Rasūl, opposite Narayanganj, Kātrābhu, (the family-residence, to the north of Qadam Rasūl) and the post at the junction of the Dulāi and the Lakhyā at Demra; while Bahādur Ghāzī, another ally, remained posted with his 200 war-boats and other forces further up the river Lakhyā, near Chaurā. Islām Khān commenced the attack on Mūsā Khān's position at the beginning of the new year, 1020 H. (March 1611). Mirzā Nathan made a night attack with his fleet on Kātrābhu. Dā'ūd Khān being unable to withstand the attack, fled to Mūsā Khān. This was followed by a full-scale Mughal attack on Qadam Rasūl by Ihtimām Khān, the Mughal admiral (Mirzā Nathan's father) with the entire Mughal fleet. 'Abd Allah Khān vacated Qadam Rasūl. While he was being pursued, Mūsā Khān's fleet made a counter-attack and was almost on the point of victory when the situation for the Mughals was saved by Mirzā Nathan. In order to divert the attention of the Afghans he made a sudden attack on Mūsā Khān's position on the mouth of the Bandar canal. Taken by surprise Mūsā Khān hastily retreated. Qadam Rasūl and the posts on the eastern bank of the Lakhyā were then occupied by the Mughals. Mūsā Khān now felt it unsafe even to stay in his capital, Sunārgāon. He evacuated it and withdrew to an island in the Meghna, called Ibrāhimpur, where his family were escorted by Mirza Mu'min. This being done, Ḥajī Shams al-Dīn Baghdādī submitted to Islām Khān and formally handed over Sunārgāon to him in Ṣafār 1020/April 1611.<sup>1</sup>

The fall of Sunārgāon practically marked the end of Mūsā Khān's resistance. He did indeed make three more attempts to recover some of his lost grounds, but each time he was repulsed by the Mughal army and navy. His brother Dā'ūd also made an attempt to recover Kātrābhu; but the Portuguese pirates made a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-85.

sudden night attack on his post and killed him unrecognized.<sup>1</sup> Mūsā Khān's followers now recognized defeat and began to submit to Islām Khān. After Dā'ūd's death and Mūsā Khān's retreat to the island of Ibrāhimpur, Bahādur Ghāzī and Majlis Qutb surrendered to Islām Khān. The viceroy appropriated their war-boats but restored their estates to them.<sup>2</sup> Mūsā Khān still held on to his island retreat. Lest he should try to escape further south and effect a junction either with Ananta Mānikya of Bhulua (Noakhali) or with the Portuguese pirates, then entrenched at Sondip island under their leader Gonzales,<sup>3</sup> Islām Khān sent a large expedition against the former under the command of Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahīd and Hājī Shams al-Dīn Baghdādī. Ananta Mānikya made an attempt to oppose the Mughal forces on the bank of the Dākatiā river, but being deserted by his chief army officer, Mirza Yūsuf Barlas, who came over to the Mughal side, first retreated to his capital Bhulua and then escaped to Arakan. His territory was annexed by Islām Khān who established two *thānās* or military outposts there, one at Bhulua and the other at Jagdia, on the bank of the Big Feni river.<sup>4</sup> Mūsā Khān now decided to surrender and opened negotiations with Islām Khān and ultimately surrendered to him in Rabī'II 1020 (July 1611) at Jahāngīrnagar. Islām Khān seized Mūsā Khān's war-boats, compelled some of his chief followers to render personal service, and kept him under strict surveillance at Dacca.<sup>5</sup> Thus came to an end the opposition of the most formidable Afghan leader in Bengal. As mentioned already, Mūsā Khān's defeat and surrender was regarded by the Mughal authorities as the end of the war with the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*, though some others of his followers still remained to be subdued.

#### IV: SUBJUGATION OF THE OTHER CHIEFS

There still remained a few more Afghan chiefs to be subdued, notably 'Uthmān Khān at Bokāinagar, east of the Brahmaputra in the Mymensingh district, together with his sons and brothers in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>3</sup> *Infra*, pp. 354-355.

<sup>4</sup> *B.G.* I., 96-98.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

south Sylhet. There were also Anwār Khān and Bāyazīd Karrānī in north and central Sylhet, and Pahlwan at Matang (between Sylhet and Tippera) who had taken part in Mūsā Khān's warfare but who now joined 'Uthmān Khān and continued the anti-Mughal struggle. Therefore, after Mūsā Khān's surrender Islām Khān sent a large army consisting of 300 war-elephants, 1000 select cavalry and 5000 musketeers, under Shaikh Kamāl and Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahīd, and the fleet, now vastly enlarged with the acquisition of Mūsā Khān's war-boats, under Ihtimām Khān and his son Mirzā Nathan, in an expedition against 'Uthmān Khān. The dry season had already started, and when early in October, 1611 (Sha'bān 1020) the army and the navy reached Hasanpur, about 23 miles south of Bokāinagar, the water-level of the river had already receded making it impossible for the fleet to proceed further upwards. Islām Khān therefore directed his generals to attack 'Uthmān's position by land. This was however a difficult task, because there was no suitable route and the landscape was generally uncharted and unknown to them. The Mughal generals Shaikh Kamāl and Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahīd therefore proceeded cautiously making small forts at short intervals in order to keep the lines of communication in the rear open<sup>1</sup>. Islām Khān himself advanced upto Took to direct the operations from that place. At that stage, however, he was faced with a serious conspiracy. Anwār Khān of Bāniachang came with his brother Hassan Khān and made an insincere submission to Islām Khān and promised to support the Mughals in their attack upon 'Uthmān and his partisans. Islām Khān considered it to be a favourable turn of the events, accepted Anwār Khān's surrender and permitted him to retain his estate. On his way back at Egārasindhu, however, Anwār Khān made contact with Bahādur Ghāzī and Maḥmūd Khān who were in the Mughal camp and hatched a conspiracy to arrest the Mughal officers by inviting them to a banquet and then, in alliance with 'Uthmān Khān, to attack the Mughal army from within the camp and from without. The conspiracy miscarried, however, and Anwār Khān succeeded in arresting only two Mughal officers with whom he fled to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-105.

Bāniachang (Habiganj subdivision of Sylhet).<sup>1</sup> Islām Khān took stern measures. He put Maḥmūd Khān and Bahādur Ghāzī in chains and directed the prosecution of the campaign against 'Uthmān with all vigour. The latter offered a very heroic resistance, fighting the Mughals at every stage. When the latter reached near Bokāinagar two of 'Uthmān's associates, Nāsir Khān and Daryā Khān of Tājpur (six miles north-west of Bokāinagar) deserted him and surrendered to the Mughal generals. Their desertion seriously weakened 'Uthmān's position; and although there was a cessation of hostilities on account of the month of Ramaḍān (October-November 1611) he left Bokāinagar and retreated into Sylhet. Shaikh Kamāl and Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahīd occupied the vacant fort of Bokāinagar after the 'Īd, towards the end of November 1611. After the capture of Bokāinagar separate expeditions were sent against Anwar Khān of Bāniachang, Pahlwan of Matang, and Khwāja Malhī and Khwāja Mumriz (brother and son respectively of 'Uthmān Khān) in Taraf. One by one all of them were forced to submit before the year was out. Anwār Khān was brought to Dacca where he was kept confined and subsequently blinded.<sup>2</sup>

#### V: ANNEXATION OF JESSORE-KHULNA AND BARISAL

Before undertaking the final expedition against 'Uthmān, Islām Khān wanted to secure his hold in the rear, particularly over Pratāpāditya of Jessore. The latter had not kept his promise of personally joining with his forces in the campaign against Mūsā Khān. On the other hand, after the latter's fall a number of Afghans had dispersed and taken shelter in Pratāpāditya's territories. Particularly Jamāl Khān, son of Qutlū Khān (of Orissa) and another Afghan leader named Khwāja Kamāl had taken shelter with Pratāpāditya and had been organizing a force there. Khwāja Kamāl had built up a formidable fleet of war-boats there of which he acted as the admiral. Moreover Pratāpāditya's son-in-law, Rāmchandra of Baklā, had not yet tendered his submission and his territory was becoming increasingly the rendezvous of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-114, 117-119, 140.

Portuguese pirates. Thus, excepting the nominal submission of Pratāpāditya, the Mughal authority over the entire tract of Khulna-Jessore and Barisal was practically non-existent. Added to this, an Afghan leader of 'Alāipur (south-east of Putia, in Rajshahi) named Ilāh Bakhsh, in alliance with Pītāmbar and Ananta, *zamindars* in southdern Rajshahi, were creating trouble in that part. Hence Islām Khān decided to do away with their power before advancing further towards the east.

Pratāpāditya seems to have realized his mistake and promptly sent his son Sangrāmāditya with 80 war-boats to Islām Khān with expressions of regret. The latter took an uncompromising attitude this time, ordered the destruction of the war-boats sent by Pratāpāditya and made preparations for an immediate expedition against him. To provide against any surprise move by 'Uthmān Khān, Islām Khān kept Kamāl and Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahīd posted with a strong force at Egārasindhu, backed by a part of the navy under Ihtimām Khān.<sup>1</sup> Then, in the middle of December 1611 (end of Ṣafar 1020) Islām Khān sent two expeditions, one against Rāmchandra of Bāklā, and the other against Pratāpāditya. The expedition toward Bāklā was under the charge of Mirzā Makkī, assisted by Rājā Satrajit; while that against Pratāpāditya was led by Ghiyāth Khān, the viceroy's brother, and Mirzā Nathan, commanding respectively the land forces and the war-boats. On their way to Jessore Mirzā Nathan and his forces suppressed the *zamindars* Pītāmbar and Ananta of Rajshahi and their protector Ilāh Bakhsh of 'Alā'ipur.<sup>2</sup> Then proceeding by and along the rivers Bhairab and Ichhāmatī the Mughal army and the navy reached a place called Salkā, about 10 miles south of Bongāon (in Jessore). Here Pratāpāditya's land-forces and war-boats, commanded by his eldest son Udayāditya, and the Afghan leaders Jamāl Khān and Khwāja Kamāl, opposed the advance of the Mughals. A combined land-cum-naval battle took place in which Jamāl Khān and Khwāja Kamāl on Pratāpāditya's side, and Mirzā Nathan on the Mughal side played prominent parts. Though the Jessore fleet of war-boats commanded by Khwāja Kamāl was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-124.



much larger and stronger, the Mughal land-forces, operating from the river banks, turned the scale in favour of the Mughals. Khwāja Kamāl fell in course of the fighting. The fall of the admiral resulted in a route of the fleet, and Udayāditya hastily fled to his father. Jamāl Khān, who was holding the Salkā fort, could not alone withstand the Mughal attack for long and had to evacuate and retreat. The Mughals then occupied the Salkā fort.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the expedition against Rāmchandra of Barisal was successfully completed. After some resistance Rāmchandra submitted and was escorted by Satrajit to Dacca where he was kept confined. His territory was annexed by Islām Khān.<sup>2</sup> The expeditionary force then came to Jessore and joined the Mughal forces there shortly after the battle of Salkā. From there Ghiyāth Khān and Mirzā Nathan proceeded further down the river. Pratāpāditya, assisted by Jamāl Khān, made his last stand at Kāgarghāt, about five miles north of his capital Dhumghāt (now in Sātkhirā subdivision of Khulna district), but was defeated and forced to retreat. Finding further resistance impossible Jamāl Khān submitted to the Mughals. Pratāpāditya, who had taken shelter in his capital, also soon tendered his submission.<sup>3</sup> He was escorted to Dacca where, along with the others he was kept confined. His territories also were annexed and Ghiyāth Khān was placed in charge of their administration. The whole operations against Bāklā and Jessore were completed within a month from mid-December 1611 to mid-January 1612.

#### VI: 'UTHMĀN KHĀN'S LAST STRUGGLE AND DEATH

Islām Khān now turned his attention to the final subjugation of 'Uthmān. The latter, after having withdrawn from Bokāinagar, had taken his position in Uhār in southern Sylhet.<sup>4</sup> He was in alliance with Bāyazīd Karrānī, who held central and portions of northern Sylhet. The expedition against 'Uthmān was organized rather on an imperial scale, for the emperor Jahāngīr recalled from

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-130.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-132.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-138.

<sup>4</sup> See Dr. M. I. Borah's note 25 to Chap. X of his translation of the *B. G. I.*, at pages 823-824. That Uhār is in Sylhet is also explicitly mentioned by Mirzā Nathan (*B. G. I.*, 158).

the Deccan his trusted friend and general Shujā'at Khān,<sup>1</sup> and sent him to Bengal with his elder brother Bāyazīd, a nephew named Shaikh 'Īsā and a son named Shaikh Qāsim, to undertake the campaign against 'Uthmān. When they reached Dacca Islām Khān called upon 'Uthmān to surrender who gave a spirited reply stating.<sup>2</sup>

"after tasting many vicissitudes of fortune, I have retired to a corner. If I am allowed to stay in this corner of contentment it is well and good. If, on the other hand, you desire to taste the trials of battle by compelling [me] to move, and not satisfied with all your territories, you want to seize this corner of mine also, and bring about a war, then only two ways will be left open. You win, if fortune helps you; on the other hand, If I am favoured by fortune I shall see where it leads to."

Thereupon a well-equipped army under Shujā'at Khān together with a fleet of war-boats in charge of Ihtimām Khān and Mirzā Nathan were sent against him. Sonā Ghāzī of Sarāil, who had submitted to the Mughals, was also asked to accompany the expedition with his war-boats. At the same time a second expedition under Shaikh Kamāl was sent against Bāyazīd Karrānī. Shujā'at Khān proceeded by way of Sarāil (7 miles north of Brāhmanbāriā town) and entered Sylhet early in the month of Dhu al-Hijja 1020 (February 1612). 'Uthmān had placed his third brother Khwāja Wālī to guard the strategic hill-pass of Tupia (or Putia) through which the Mughals had to advance. The pass was commanded by two forts on top of the hills on both sides and it was really difficult to reduce them; but Wālī, displaying an uncommon cowardice, abandoned his post when the Mughals approached it. Shujā'at Khān then easily occupied the forts and after staying there for a day to celebrate the 'Īd al-'adḥā resumed his march forward.<sup>3</sup> At that stage 'Uthmān Khān came out of his capital with a large force to oppose the Mughals. He took his stand at Dawlambapur, "four or five miles south of Maulavibāzār". Here a great battle took place between him and the Mughals on 9 Muharram 1021/12 March 1612. 'Uthmān himself led the centre of the Afghan army consisting of 2000 cavalry, 5000 infantry and 40 war-elephants; his brother Khwāja Wālī comman-

<sup>1</sup> B.G. I., 157-158. Shujā'at Khān also belonged to the family of Shaikh Salīm Chishtī.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-170.

ded the left with 1000 cavalry, 2000 infantry and 30 war-elephants; the right wing, consisting of 700 cavalry, 1000 infantry and 20 war-elephants was led by a trusty slave, Shīr-i-Maydān; while the van consisting of 1500 cavalry, 2000 infantry and 50 war-elephants was commanded by 'Uthmān's brothers Khwāja Malhī and Khwāja Ibrāhīm, and nephew Khwāja Da'ūd. On the Mughal side the centre was led by Shujā'at Khān aided by Ihtimām Khān and Mu'taqid Khān; the centre was under Mirzā Nathan, aided by Sonā Ghāzī, Sayyid Adam, Mirzā Qāsim, Shaikh Achcha and others; the right wing was commanded by Iftikhār Khān and the left wing was led by Kishwar Khān. As the battle progressed the superiority of the Afghans was clearly demonstrated. Under pressure of a division of the Afghan infantry the Mughal van under Mirzā Nathan was thrown into utter confusion, and one of its officers Shaikh Achcha was killed by their own artillery fire. The right wing was similarly broken through, and its commander Iftikhār Khān was surrounded and killed with a number of his horsemen and soldiers. The left wing of the Mughals launched an attack on the Afghan right wing; but the latter under Shīr-i-Maydān made a vigorous counter-charge, overwhelmed the enemy, killing many including the commander Kishwar Khān and his assistant Sayyid Adam, and compelled the rest to retreat to the main camp. 'Uthmān's son Mumriz then launched an attack with his elephants upon the rear of the Mughal van. Mirzā Nathan, the Mughal commander, was wounded and carried unconscious to his camp. The right and left wings and the van of the Mughal army thus broken and overwhelmed, the centre under Shujā'at Khān had now to bear the brunt of the Afghan attack. Soon the centre was also broken and Shujā'at Khān was isolated and surrounded. 'Uthmān attempted to capture him. At that point of victory 'Uthmān was mortally wounded by an arrow - which passed through his left eye into the brain. He succeeded in killing his assailant, but he soon died on the battle field. His son Mumriz quickly carried his dead father to the camp, kept the news of his death carefully concealed, and continued the battle till the end of the day. When the Mughals returned to their camp at night they were still unaware of the

death of 'Uthmān and spent the night with much vigilance and anxiety for the coming day as their loss in men and officers was heavy. With the death of 'Uthmān, however, the life and soul of the Afghan resistance was gone. In the Afghan camp the brothers and sons of 'Uthmān, along with other leading nobles, decided to withdraw quietly to the capital and to reorganize themselves under the leadership of 'Uthmān's son Mumriz for renewing the war. Accordingly they left the field with their forces after mid-night. In the morning the Mughals found to their surprise and relief that the Afghans had retreated.<sup>1</sup> As the fate of 'Uthmān was not yet known, and the Mughals were very much weakened by the previous day's fighting, Shujā'at Khān did not dare undertake an immediate pursuit. The task for the Mughals was made easier, however, by the dissensions which soon developed among the Afghans. Wālī, 'Uthmān's third brother, aspired after the leadership and refused to cooperate with Mumriz. In the meantime fresh reinforcements having arrived, Shujā'at Khān advanced towards the Afghan capital Uhār. As he approached it, negotiations were opened by Wālī Mandu Khel, 'Uthmān's minister, and on 11 Muharram (14 March 1612) 'Uthman's brothers Khwāja Wālī, Khwāja Malhī, and Khwāja Ibrāhīm, his sons Khwāja Mumriz and Khwāja Ya'qūb, and nephew Khwāja Dā'ūd, together with other nobles numbering 400 men tendered their submission to Shujā'at Khān.<sup>2</sup> The latter posted troops at Uhār, made arrangements for the administration of the territory, and then taking the Afghan leaders with him started for Dacca where he reached on 7 Šafar 1021 (8 April 1612). Islām Khān kept 'Uthmān's brothers and sons in confinement and sent a detailed report about the campaign and victory to emperor Jahāngīr who was much happy and relieved to know about 'Uthmān Afghan's final defeat and death. The emperor records in his memoirs: "When the joyful news reached in Agra this supplicant at the throne of Allah, he performed the prostrations of gratitude, and recognized that the driving away of this description of enemy was brought about simply through the unstinted mercy

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-192. See also *Tuzuk.*, I., 209-214.

<sup>2</sup> *B.G.*, I., 194, 197.

of the Almighty Giver.”<sup>1</sup>

The death of ‘Uthman Khān and the surrender of his sons and brothers also spelt the breakdown of Bāyazīd Karrānī’s resistance in central Sylhet. There he and his brother Ya’qūb had been offering a very spirited resistance to the Mughal expeditionary force under Shaikh Kamāl and others.<sup>2</sup> As the Mughal forces approached Bāyazīd’s capital Sylhet he sent his brother Ya’qūb with a strong force to oppose them. Ya’aūb erected a fort on the bank of the Surma river. Shaikh Kamāl despatched a contingent under Rājā Satrajit to take the fort by assault. After a week’s continuous fighting the Mughal forces succeeded in capturing it; but soon Ya’qūb received reinforcements, especially from Kāchār. Its Rājā, on an appeal by Bāyazīd, sent a contingent to the aid of the Afghans. Ya’qūb renewed his onslaught on the Mughals and drove them out of the fort with heavy losses. Some more fightings followed in which the Mughals were being successively beaten back. At this stage the news of ‘Uthmān’s death and the surrender of his brothers and sons reached Sylhet. This completely dispirited the Afghans there. Bāyazīd now begged for peace and handed over his elephants to Shaikh Kamāl, and also proposed to accompany him to Dacca to tender submission to Islām Khān. Shaikh Kamāl accepted the offer and after placing an officer and a contingent of force there, returned to Dacca, bringing with him Bāyazīd, his brother Ya’qūb and other Afghan chiefs. Islām Khān formally annexed Sylhet to the Bengal *ṣubāh* and kept the Afghan chiefs in close custody.

With the submission of Bāyazīd Karrānī in Sylhet the Afghan resistance in Bengal came to an end and Mughal supremacy was acknowledged throughout the country. It was as much a personal success of Islām Khān as that of the superior forces of the Mughals. In fact it was almost impossible for the Afghan chiefs to resist for long the vast Mughal power. Their fate was indeed sealed when Dā’ūd Shāh was defeated and killed. Yet they offered a very long and persistent opposition to the Mughals. The final success of Islām Khān was due to several factors. The Afghan

<sup>1</sup> *Tuzuk.*, I., 214.

<sup>2</sup> *B.G.*, I., 163, 166, 171, 172, 173.

chiefs were scattered all over the country, and although this was of some advantage to them in the sense that the Mughals had to defeat each and every one of them and to conquer the land bit by bit, each chief had necessarily a smaller and weaker force in comparison to that of the Mughals. 'Īsā Khān and his son Mūsā Khān had indeed organized a strong confederacy against the Mughals; but the ready submission and cooperation of the *zamindars* like Pratāpāditya, Rājā Satrajit and Rājā Raghunāth with the Mughals practically surrounded the confederacy by the enemy forces. This enabled Islām Khān to concentrate his attention upon Musā Khān and his confederates. After the latter's defeat and subjugation, the suppression of the others became comparatively easy. Secondly, unlike Mānsingh, Islām Khān, instead of personally leading the campaigns, deputed his generals to fight the battles and himself remained at his base directing and coordinating the operations. This is best illustrated by his planning of the campaign against 'Uthmān Khān. That leader was finally attacked only when the other parts of Bengal were brought under control and when fresh reinforcements and more capable generals like Shujā'at Khān arrived from Agra.

#### VII: LAST DAYS OF ISLĀM KHĀN: DACCA MADE CAPITAL OF MUGHAL BENGAL

The services of Islām Khān were well rewarded by the emperor Jahāngīr who promoted him to the "rank of 6000 personal". Shujā'at Khān was also honoured with the title of *Rustam-i-Zamān* (Rusatam of the age) and an increase in his rank by "1000 persoanal and horse". The emperor also increased the rank of the other servants according to the measure of their services, and they were "selected for other honours".<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the suppression of Bāyazīd and Ya'qūb in Sylhet, Islām Khān sent an expedition in 1612 under Shaikh Kamāl against Kāchār, situated to the east of Sylhet. The reason was perhaps the Kāchār ruler Śatrudaman's (alias Pratāp Nārāyan, 1605—1628) assistance to the Afghan chiefs during their opposition to the Mughals. Śatrudaman attempted to resist the advance

<sup>1</sup> *Tuzuk.*, I., 214.

of the Mughals by constructing two frontier forts, one at Asuratekar, identified with modern Haritkar, and the other, 20 miles south-west of it, at Pratāpgarh. The Mughal forces were much handicapped by the guerilla and night attacks of the Kāchāris, but were ultimately successful in overcoming their opposition and in capturing the two frontier forts. Thereupon Śatrudaman sued for peace. Shaikh Kamāl accepted his overtures and with the approval of Islām Khān concluded a peace giving rather easy terms to the Kāchār ruler. Emperor Jahāngīr, however, disapproved Islām Khān's action and asked him to renew the campaign under Mubārīz Khān. This was done and the Kāchār ruler was forced to tender definite submission and to pay suitable tribute.<sup>1</sup>

The last military achievement of Islām Khān was the conquest of Kāmrūp in 1613. The Mughal intervention in Kāmrūp was the result of the Kāmrūp Rājā Parikshit Nārāyan's own highhanded and aggressive proceedings. There was a dynastic rivalry between him and the Kuch Bihar Rājā Lakshmī Nārāyan, who was a subordinate ally of the Mughals. Parikshit Nārāyan attacked Kuch Bihar and captured two of its north-eastern districts. Next he attacked another ally of the Mughals, Rājā Raghunāth of Shushang, and carried away his family as captives. Parikshit also seems to have harboured some Afghans, for his main fort at Dhubri, now in the Goalpara district of Assam, was under the command of one Fath Khān Salkā. The carrying away of Raghunāth's family stirred Islām Khān to action. He decided to recover the captives by conquering Kāmrūp. Early in November 1612 he sent a large expedition under Mukarram Khān, with Shaikh Kamāl as second in command, and accompanied by Rājā Raghunāth and some of the recently subdued Afghans.<sup>2</sup> The expeditionary force consisted of 1000 cavalry, 5000 musketeers and 300 war-elephants, together with 400 war-boats under Mirzā Nathan and 100 war-boats of Mūsā Khān under his admiral 'Ādil Khān, and another fleet under Bahādur Ghāzī and Sonā Ghāzī. When the forces reached Sālkonā, on the bank of the

<sup>1</sup> B.G., I., 219-220.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

Brahmaputra in the south-east of Kuch Bihar, the Kāmṛūp Rājā opposed them with a fleet of 300 war-boats. He was however defeated and put to flight. Most of his war-boats were captured by the Mughals.<sup>1</sup> The territories which he had captured in the south-east of Kuch Bihar (the districts of Bahirband and Bhitār-band) were then recovered by Mirzā Nathan by a swift campaign.<sup>2</sup> The Mughal forces then proceeded northwards along the river and laid siege to Parikshit's strong fort of Dhubri. It held out for three months and was then captured. The commandant of the fort, Fath Khān Salkā, surrendered to the Mughals.<sup>3</sup> The Kāmṛūp army, however, fled to Gilāh, another fortified place about 10 miles north of Dhubri. The fall of Dhubri and the surrender of Fath Khān broke down Parikshit's resistance and he sued for peace, proposing to release the captives, to pay rich presents to the Mughal commander and to acknowledge the supremacy of the Mughals.<sup>4</sup> The Mughal commander accepted the peace terms but Islām Khan, mindful perhaps of the emperor's recent disapproval of such proceedings in connection with the Kāchār campaign, rejected the peace offer and demanded the surrender of Parikshit's person as well as his kingdom.<sup>5</sup> On his refusal to do so, a two pronged attack was launched against him. On the one hand the Kuch Bihar ruler Lakshmi Nārāyah, assisted by a Mughal contingent under Rājā Satrajit, attacked him from the west, while another land-and-naval force proceeded to Gilāh and laid siege to it, cutting off its line of supplies. Threatened with starvation Parikshit came out of Gilāh and made a desperate attempt to recover the Dhubri fort by a combined land and naval attack. The attempt failed, however, and he fled to his capital, Baranagar, on the bank of the Manasā river, opposite Goālpārā. The Mughals pursued him there and their war-boats on the Manasā river blocked his way of escape further towards the interior. Thus surrounded he at last surrendered in July 1613. He was spared his life and personal liberty but his kingdom was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-231.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-238, 239.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 239-240.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.



annexed to the Bengal *ṣūbah* and his war-elephants were taken over.<sup>1</sup>

Before the victorious army returned to the capital Islām Khān fell ill and died on 21 August 1613. His work was, however, well accomplished. When he came to Bengal effective Mughal authority extended only over a small strip of land around Rajmahal and the Afghans were still very strong in their resistance. Islām Khān came to Bengal with the determination to break the Afghans' power and to establish Mughal supremacy throughout the country. He succeeded in doing that. He also established a well organized system of administration in the province. Of this later work, his fixation of the capital at Dacca was a wise and constructive measure. It is not on record exactly on what date he formally inaugurated that city as his capital. As described earlier, at the beginning of his campaign against Mūsā Khān in 1609 Islām Khān sent some of his officers including Shaikh Kamāl to Dacca with instructions to repair the forts there and otherwise to take measures for launching an all-out offensive against Mūsā Khān. Islām Khān himself does not appear to have moved there till after the capture of Dākchara from Mūsā Khān in 1610. Shortly after his arrival at Dacca Islām Khān renamed the city after his sovereign, calling it Jahāngīrnagar. From that time it virtually became the capital of the province. It is doubtful that he finally fixed it as the capital before the suppression of the *Bāra Bhuiyān* confederacy under Mūsā Khān and the formal annexation of their territories<sup>2</sup>. When that was done, its continuation as the capital

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 242-243.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. M. I. Borah, translator of the *Baharistān-i-Ghaibī*, is of opinion that Dacca became the capital with the arrival of Islām Khān there (*B.G.*, II, 813-814); while Dr. S. N. Bhattacharya (*Dacca University Studies*, I, 1935, 36-63) and following him N. K. Bhattachali (*B.P.P.*, 1936, 48-49) suggest that the formal transfer of capital took place afterwards, probably in 1612. Supporting in effect Dr. Borah's opinion, Dr. A. Karim states (*Dacca the Mughal capital*, Dacca 1964, 13) that Islām Khān had made up his mind about the transfer of the capital even before his arrival at that place and that while "still near Shāhzādpur in modern Pabna district, he sent three imperial officers accompanied by a great number of soldiers, boats and subordinate staff to Dacca" to construct or repair a fort there and otherwise to "prepare Dacca, hitherto the seat of a *thānādar* for the reception of the government...." This view is not however quite supported by the contemporary authority, (*B.G.*, I, 54) which Dr. Karim quotes about the sending of officers etc. from Shāhzādpur. As described already, the sending of officers and troops in advance by Islām Khān to Dacca was a part of his campaign against Mūsā Khān and his confederates, and it cannot be reasonably assumed that Islām Khān had already taken his decision to transfer the capital there before the suppression of Mūsā Khān and his allies and the annexation of their territories.

seemed only natural. In fact the constitution of Bihar into a separate province by the Mughals necessiated the fixation of a new capital for Bengal. Mānsingh's transfer of the capital to Rajmahal was not, in that sense, a practical and wise choice; for it was situated almost at the western extremity of the province, away from central and eastern Bengal. Nothing more clearly demonstrated Mānsingh's mistake than the necessity which compelled him to stay for long intervals at Ghorāghāt during his first term of office. However, now that the Afghans and other *zamindars* had been subdued and the frontiers of Mughal Bengal extended upto Sylhet in the east, the situation of Dacca almost at the centre of the *subah* suggested itself as the natural capital of the province. Secondly, one of Mānsingh's main considerations in shifting the capital to Rajmahal was to place the administrative headquarters beyond the range of a sudden river attack by the enemies. Now the position was completely reversed. The Mughals now possessed a very strong river flotilla and the acquisition of the fleets of the Afghans and other chiefs had removed the fear of such enemy attack. On the contrary, in the light of the possession of the fleet, the location of Dacca almost surrounded by rivers and with easy access to the principal water-routes of the country now invested it with a new strategic significance for the Mughals. Thirdly, the continued existence of the administrative and military headquarters at Dacca was necessary not only to consolidate and administer the newly acquired territories, but also to hold in check the Arakanese and the Portuguese who were becoming increasingly powerful in the south and south-eastern regions of Bengal. Obviously for these reasons Islām Khān fixed the provincial capital at Dacca. And it inaugurated a new era in the history of eastern Bengal generally. It focussed attention to this region in a way in which it had never been before. Dacca soon grew to be an important city and a flourishing centre of trade and commerce. Islām Khān himself contributed much to its development by the construction of new edifices and forts. The fixation of the capital at Dacca, besides paving the way for the all-round development of eastern Bengal, proved to be the stepping stone for further extension of the Mughal jurisdiction in the south-east including

Chittagong. With the exception of a brief interval Dacca continued to be the capital of the country for about a century after which it was removed to Murshidabad.

PART III

MUGHAL RULE IN BENGAL

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE MUGHAL PACIFICATION AND THE BEGINNING OF FRONTIER WARS

Islām Khān had just succeeded before his death in subduing the Afghan leaders and other chiefs. Their complete pacification and consolidation of the Mughals' hold over Bengal was yet to be achieved. Moreover, as the latter succeeded in defeating the Bengal chiefs, the affairs in the north-east and south-east frontiers were bound to attract the new administration's attention. During the previous period of troubles the Assam ruler in the north-east and the Arakanese and the Portuguese in the south-east had made considerable inroads into those frontier regions. A conflict with them now became almost inevitable. Not unnaturally therefore the two immediate successors of Islām Khān in Bengal found themselves confronted with these tasks. These two successors were Qāsim Khān (1023-1026/1614-1617) and Ibrāhīm Khān (1026-1033/1617-1624). The latter died in a battle at Akbarnagar near Rajmahal with Prince Shāh Jahān who had then revolted against his father Jahāngīr. Shāh Jahān held the province for about a year after which it was recovered for the emperor Jahāngīr. His reign was however quickly drawing to a close and for the remaining three years of his life Bengal was governed by three successive viceroys, Mahābat Khān (assisted by his son Khānahzād Khān), Mukarram Khān and Fidā'ī Khān. These two viceroyalties were in the nature of stop-gap arrangements and they were not marked by any significant event or development.

#### I: VICEROYALTY OF QĀSIM KHĀN (1023—1026/1614—1617)

Qāsim Khān was the brother of the late viceroy Islām Khān and was governor of Monghyr in Bihar before his appointment as viceroy of Bengal. The new viceroy, however, lacked his late brother's ability, intelligence and resourcefulness, and he committed the initial mistake of making some delay in taking up his assignment. For although he was appointed to succeed his brother in Sha'bān 1022/September 1613 he arrived at Jahāngīrnagar about

eight months later, in Rabī' I 1023/May 1614. During the interval the *dīwān* Mirzā Husain Beg carried on the administration virtually combining in himself the functions of the viceroy and the *korwāl*, together with those of his own charge as *dīwān*. He was assisted in his work by the *bakhshī* Khwāja Tāhir Muḥammad, the *wāqī'a nawīs* (newswriter) Āqā Yāghmā, and the late viceroy's son Shaikh Hushang. When therefore Qāsim Khān at last arrived at Dacca and assumed charge of his office he found himself not quite liked by this group. The conflict came to surface over the appointment of a new *Korwāl* which was opposed by the *dīwān*, Mirza Husain Beg. His son attacked the viceroy's men, killing and wounding a number of them. In retaliation Qāsim Khān arrested the *dīwān* and confiscated his property. The dispute was however finally resolved by the intervention of the emperor Jahāngīr who successively sent two officers to investigate the affair and to settle financial matters. The *dīwān* was released and his property restored. Further, Qāsim Khān was compelled to pay him a compensation of 100,000 rupees. This was, after all, not a very good beginning; and relations between his group and that of the *dīwān* continued to be strained so that, after some time, the emperor recalled the *dīwān* and sent Mukhlis Khān in his place giving him also the power to select the *bakhshī* and the *wāqī'a nawīs*.<sup>1</sup>

Scarcely had the internal squabbles and personal rivalries been over when the viceroy's attention was drawn to the affairs in Kāchhār in the north-east. That territory, as related above,<sup>2</sup> had been subdued by Islām Khān and its chief Śatrudaman had been forced to acknowledge his allegiance to the Mughal sovereign. It appears however that after Islām Khān's death Śatrudaman had thrown off his allegiance and assumed independence. To make things worse, a section of the people in south-western Kāchhār adjoining Sylhet started a new trouble. They claimed themselves to be 'Mughals' in origin, giving out that they were the descendants of a company of Timūr's soldiers who were said to have been left in India and who, in course of time, had migrated to

<sup>1</sup> *Tuzuk*, I., 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 317-318

that part of the country. Although those people spoke the Kāchhārī language, they differed from the other Kāchhāris in physical features, manners and customs. Before their claims grew out of proportions, however, Qāsim Khān promptly decided to suppress them. Accordingly he sent against them an expedition in November 1614 (Shawwāl 1023) under Mubārīz Khān, the *thānadār* of Bindasil in eastern Sylhet. It did not take long for Mubārīz Khān to defeat and subdue these people. After his return from that campaign Qāsim Khān sent him, supported by Mirak Bahādur Jalair, with a well-equipped army against Śatrudaman. As on the occasion of the previous Mughal campaign against Kāchhār, in which also Mubārīz Khān had taken part, he followed the same route and attacked first the fort of Pratāpgarh in the south-west of Kāchhār, and then the fort of Asuretakar, a few miles northwards. At both the places Śatrudaman offered a stubborn resistance, but was defeated and the forts were captured by the Mughal army. Once again Śatrudaman sued for peace, reaffirming his allegiance to the Mughal emperor, offering tributes in cash and elephants, and praying for personal liberty and exemption from attendance at court. Qāsim Khān accepted the proposals, but before the agreement could be finalized Mubārīz Khān suddenly died. Thereupon his assistant Mirak Bahādur Jalair precipitately evacuated the fort of Asuretakar and withdrew to Sylhet. Thus inspite of the success of the military campaign, its practical political result was nil. Qāsim Khān of course replaced Mirak Bahādur Jalair by Mukarram Khān, the conqueror of Kām-rūp; but no further immediate expedition could be sent against Śatrudaman because of the more formidable danger of an Arakanese invasion from the south-east.

During the Mughal-Afghan contest and the troublous period that followed the Arakanese ruler Meng Khamaung extended his authority upto Chittagong where he built a strong fort and stationed a strong naval force. From there he used to carry on frequent plundering raids into the southern districts of Bengal as far as Sunārgāon in the east and Hugli in the west.<sup>1</sup> In course of

<sup>1</sup> See J.N. Sarkar, "The Feringi pirates of Chatgaon", *J.A.S.B.*, 1907, 419-425. It is based on Shihāb al-Dīn Tālish's account, the relevant portions of which are reproduced by Sarkar.

such undertakings he at times came into conflicts with the Portuguese pirates, particularly one of their leaders named Sebastian Gonzales who had at that time established himself at the island of Sondip.<sup>1</sup> The establishment of the Mughal sway over Bengal was however viewed as a common danger by both the Arakanese king and Gonzales and naturally both now thought in terms of co-operating with each other for resisting or frustrating the Mughal jurisdiction in southern Bengal. Islām Khān's conquest of Bhulua (Noakhali) practically brought the Mughal power in direct contact with the Arakanese. It may be recalled that when the Mughal army advanced upon Bhulua its ruler Rājā Ananta Mānikya fled to Arakan seeking the help of its ruler. The subsequent activities of Ananta Mānikya are not however known; but the Arakan king soon patched up his quarrel with Gonzales of Sondip and in league with him launched a combined land and naval attack upon Bhulua early in December 1614 (Dhu al-Qa'dah 1023). Qāsim Khān had not yet been completely free from the Kāchhār expedition. The Arakan king proceeded by land from Chittagong with a large army including 700 war elephants and accompanied by the Portuguese land forces, while his navy joined that of Gonzales and advanced by water.<sup>2</sup> 'Abd al-Wāḥid, the Mughal *thānādār* at Bhulua, found it impossible to oppose the invading forces and retreated north towards the Dākātīā river and the Māchwa Khāl (rivulet) in order to be out of reach of the large Portuguese-Arakanese war-boats. This gave a free hand to the latter who, after plundering Bhulua and the lands that lay on both sides of the river, advanced upto the Dākātīā river. At that stage, however, the allies fell out among themselves. The Arakanese king arrested the Firingi (Portuguese) officers in his company, including the nephew of the Firingi admiral, Antonio Carvalho, while the latter, in retaliation, captured the admiral and other officers of the Arakan fleet, plundered its treasures and artillery and quickly retired to Sondip, leaving the Arakanese king alone on land to face the Mughals. 'Abd al-Wāḥid did not fail to

<sup>1</sup> Sondip was formerly within the jurisdiction of Noakhali district. It is now under the jurisdiction of Chittagong.

<sup>2</sup> *B.G.I.*, 146.



take advantage of the situation. He was in the meantime strengthened by the arrival of reinforcements sent by Qāsim Khān under Shaikh Farīd, Shaikh Kamāl and Mirzā Makkī. 'Abd al-Wāhid now recrossed the Dākātīā and launched a vigorous counter-attack upon the Arakan king. Bereft of any naval support and deserted by the Portuguese land forces who had accompanied him, he was forced to make a precipitate retreat across the Feni rivers, leaving behind a large number of his soldiers and war-elephants in the hands of the pursuing Mughal army.

The Arakan king could not immediately resume his hostilities against the Mughals because in the following year (1024/1615) he was involved, on the one hand, in hostilities with the Portuguese and, on the other, in a conflict with the Burmese king Mahā Dharma Rājā (1605—1628).<sup>1</sup> In the same year, however, Qāsim Khān did not have peace. His attention was now drawn to the north-east. The subjugation of Kuch Bihar and Kāmṛūp during Islām Khān's viceroyalty had brought the Mughals in contact with the Ahom kingdom of Assam lying to the east of Kāmṛūp and corresponding roughly to the modern Assam districts of Darrang, Naogaon and Sibsagar. The Mughal hold over Kāmṛūp now spilled into a conflict with the Ahom kingdom. It was precipitated by the conduct of the Kuch Bihar and Kāmṛūp Rājās, Lakshmī Nārāyan and Parikshit Nārāyan, who, though they had promised their allegiance, were now in treasonable contact with the Ahom kingdom. Shortly after his assumption of office as viceroy Qāsim Khān found it necessary, therefore, first to keep these two persons under close surveillance at Jahāngīrnagar and then to send them away to the emperor's court. This naturally caused some discontent in their respective territories. Parikshit Nārāyan's brother, Bali Nārāyan, took shelter with the Ahom king. Whether this was the immediate cause of the conflict is not clear; but soon Qāsim Khān sent an expedition against him under the command of Abā Bakr, who was accompanied by about 12000 cavalry and infantry and a fleet of 400 war-boats. Abā Bakr proceeded by way of Baranagar, the

<sup>1</sup> A.P. Phyre, *History of Burma*, London, 1883, 176-177; also G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, London, 1925, 189.

old capital of Kāmrup, thence to Hājo, the new Mughal headquarters, and from there to the frontier post of Kohhātā on the Barnadī. There he spent the rainy season of 1615 (June—September). The unhealthy climate of the place caused illness among the Mughal army and a number of them died. At the end of the rainy season Abā Bakr entered Assam and captured the Ahom frontier post of Kājli by the middle of November of that year. He then advanced upon the next Ahom stronghold of Samdhara, lying at the confluence of the Bhareli and the Brahmaputra. Here the Ahom king offered a tough resistance. About the middle of January 1516 (1024 H) the Ahom forces numbering about 300,000 with 700 war elephants crossed the river Bhareli under cover of a dark night and suddenly fell upon the Mughal encampment. A severe land and naval battle took place in which Abā Bakr, the commander, together with a number of officers, were killed, and a large number of the Mughal war-boats were also captured by the Assamese. The other commanders of the Mughal land forces and war-boats, Miran Sayyid Mas'ūd, Sonā Ghāzī and Rājā Satrajit, managed to escape with the remnant of the Mughal army and navy.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime the Arakan king had become free from his entanglements with the Portuguese and the Burmese. Towards the end of 1615, therefore, he renewed his attack upon Bhulua. As on the previous occasion, this time also 'Abd al-Wāhid, the Mughal *thānādār*, found it necessary to withdraw to the more convenient position near the Dākātiā river. His son, Mirzā Nūr al-Dīn, however, made a plan to trap the Arakan forces. He lay in hiding with a considerable force of cavalry opposite a bog near the river. When the Arakan king had just crossed that spot Nūr al-Dīn suddenly made a cavalry charge upon him. 'Abd al-Wāhid also attacked him from the other direction. Thus being surrounded by enemies the Arakan forces were thrown into utter confusion. In their attempt to retreat they were forced into the quagmire. A large number of them were killed, some managed to escape, but the king himself together with his nephew and war-elephants

<sup>1</sup> B.G., I, 396.

were stuck up in the muddy ground. In utter distress he sued for peace, offering to surrender all his officers and men, including his nephew, and also the elephants and other war equipments, and praying in return only to be spared his life and personal liberty. 'Abd al-Wāhid accepted these terms and allowed the Arakan king to escape almost alone towards Chittagong. With the prisoners of war and the elephants 'Abd al-Wāhid triumphantly returned to Bhulua early in January 1516.

'Abd al-Wāhid's treatment of the Arakan king, the traditional invader and disturber of peace in the south-eastern region, does not appear to be politic; and most probably the viceroy, Qāsim Khān, was not quite happy over it. For shortly afterwards, in February 1516, he himself advanced to Bhulua and from there sent an expedition under 'Abd al-Nabī to drive away the Arakan king from Chittagong and to capture that place. The progress of the Mughal forces were checked, however, at Kāthgar, near Sītākund, where the Arakan king had erected a fort and had concentrated a large force backed by a fleet of about 1000 war-boats. 'Abd al-Nabī at first attempted to capture the fort by assault, but being unsuccessful in that effort he laid siege to it. The siege dragged on for a long time as a result of which food-supplies ran short forcing the Mughal general to raise the siege in May 1516 and to return to Bhulua.

Apart from the above mentioned external affairs, Qāsim Khān's viceroyalty was also troubled by the insubordination of some of the recently subdued Afghan chiefs and zamindars. Shortly after his assumption of office two of the Afghan chiefs who had settled themselves in south-west Bengal threw off their allegiance and assumed an attitude of independence. These were Bahādur Khān, nephew and successor of Salīm Khan of Hijli (south-eastern Midnapur), and Shams Khān of Pachet. They were joined by Bīr Hamīr of Burdwan, a Hindu zamindar, and Bīrbhān of Chandrakona (north Midnapur). Qāsim Khān sent two expeditions against them, one under Shaikh Kamāl and the other under Mirzā Makkī. When the Mughal forces arrived at those places the Afghan chiefs and the Hindu zamindars promptly submitted and were allowed to remain in possession of their

estates.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1617 Qāsim Khān was recalled from Bengal by Jahāngīr. Succeeding, as he did, an illustrious viceroy like Islām Khān, Qāsim Khān's abilities and qualities naturally appear less brilliant; but allowance must be made for the fact that he was initially faced with an unfriendly group of Islām Khānī nobles and, further, that his short viceroyalty was crowded by a succession of external and internal troubles. During the three years of his office he was obliged to take five major expeditions against external enemies — two against Kāchhār and Assam, and three against the Arakanese king, two of which was defensive and one punitive. These were in addition to the expeditions against the insubordinate zamindars. He did not succeed in all his military undertakings; but he did not definitely leave the Mughal position in Bengal weaker than he had found it. His troubles were essentially a legacy of the hastily finished work of Islām Khān; and it would be both unsympathetic and incorrect to assert, as one writer has done, that "the grand work of Islām Khān had been undone by his brother."<sup>2</sup> Far from destroying Islām Khān's work, Qāsim Khān rather continued and completed it.

## II: VICEROYALTY OF IBRĀHĪM KHĀN (1027—1033/1617—1624)

Ibrāhīm Khān succeeded Qāsim Khān in November 1617. The new viceroy was the brother of the empress Nūr Jahān and was governor of Bihar before his assignment to Bengal. As governor of Bihar he had conquered the territory of "Khokhara" (Chota Nāgpur), then famous for a diamond mine there,<sup>3</sup> and was for that meritorious act rewarded with an increase in his *manṣab* (rank) and the title of *Fath Jang*.<sup>4</sup> He was able, intelligent and energetic, and had the additional advantage of enjoying the trust and confidence of the emperor. The six years of Ibrāhīm Khān's viceroyalty were however characterized by the same problems and similar events as those which marked the period of his

<sup>1</sup> *Tuzuk*, I, 392.

<sup>2</sup> S.N. Bhattacharyya in *H.B.* II, 298.

<sup>3</sup> *Tuzuk*, I, 314.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

predecessor. The same troubles in the north-east over the possession of Kāmrup, the hostile relationship with Assam, the inroads by the Arakanese and the Portuguese in the south-east and the insubordination of some of the zamindars repeated themselves with the same pattern of counter-moves by the viceroy. Nor did he attain any the more tangible result with respect to any of these problems than his predecessor. It would therefore be far from correct to say that Ibrāhīm Khān's viceroyalty was "marked by peace and tranquillity unknown before" and that for the first time since the Mughal conquest "Bengal now settled down to enjoy the blessings of Mughal peace."<sup>1</sup>

Ibrāhīm Khān's arrival in Bengal almost coincided with a rather serious development in Kāmrūp. There the Mughal revenue collector Shaikh Ibrāhīm misappropriated the revenue of that region, entered into a treasonable plot with the Ahom king and his protegee Bali Nārāyan (brother of Parikshit Nārāyan) and rose in rebellion.<sup>2</sup> Mirzā Nathan, the historian and a faithful officer, attempted to put down Shaikh Ibrāhīm without success. It was only after Ibrāhīm Khān's arrival in Bengal and the sending in of reinforcements that the rebellious officer was defeated and killed. But the mischief done by him was not yet over. Bali Nārāyan was emboldened to attack Kāmrūp. Backed by the Ahom king he captured Pandu, a Mughal frontier outpost, and advanced upto Hājo, the Mughal headquarters in Kāmrūp. He was accompanied by a fairly large force and succeeded for a time in overpowering the Mughals. Reinforcements were soon rushed in and he was ultimately driven back with heavy loss in February 1618.

Shaikh Ibrāhīm's rebellion and Bali Nārāyan's inroad into Kāmrup induced Ibrāhīm Khān to think of creating some sort of a political counterpoise in the region. Accordingly he wrote to the emperor for releasing the Kuch Bihar and Kāmrūp Rājās, Lakshmi Nārāyan and Parikshit Nārāyan, who had been exiled to Delhi by Qāsim Khān, and also the sons of Rājā Pratāpāditya of Jessore,

<sup>1</sup> S.N. Bhattacharyya, *H.B.* II., 299.

<sup>2</sup> *B.G.*, 443-445.

who had been sent to court by Islām Khān. The emperor accepted the recommendation and released them. At the same time (middle of March 1618) Ibrāhīm Khān also released the Afghan leader Mūsā Khān and his other colleagues who had been kept confined at Dacca since the time of Islām Khān. This act of political clemency was undoubtedly a wise measure and it served to strengthen the viceroy's hands. Mūsā Khān served the Mughal cause faithfully during the remainder of his life; while Rājā Lakshmī Nārāyan also remained loyal. The situation in Kāmrūp, however, did not improve much. In fact almost immediately after the Kāmrūp Rājā Paṭikshit Nārāyan's release, one of his younger brothers, Madhusūdan, suddenly revolted and captured its south-western *parganā* of Karibāri. The revolt was suppressed only by the heroic exertions of Mūsā Khān, who was sent there immediately after his release at the head of an expedition. Nonetheless Kāmrūp continued to be a trouble-spot throughout the period.

Ibrāhīm Khān's main instruction from the emperor was to put an end to the Arakanese incursions. Accordingly, as soon as Madhusūdan's rebellion in Kāmrūp was suppressed, Ibrāhīm Khān turned his attention towards the south-east. Like Qāsim Khān, he also came to the conclusion that the capture of Chittagong from the Arakan king would be the only effective deterrent against his repeated raids into Bengal. As a preliminary step towards achieving this objective the viceroy decided first to conquer Tripura so that it might not create trouble in the rear by entering into an alliance with the Arakan ruler. Hence during the later part of 1618 Ibrāhīm Khān launched a three-pronged attack on Tripura. One division of the army was sent under the command of Mirzā Isfandiyār through the modern Brahmanbaria subdivision to enter Tripura from its north-west side; a second division was sent under Mirzā Nūr al-Dīn and Mūsā Khān by way of Mihirkul near modern Comilla town to proceed towards the Tripura capital Udaipur from the west; while the fleet of war-boats under the admiral Bahādur Khān proceeded up the river Gumti by way of Comilla. The Tripura king Jaśomānikya came out of his capital and at first opposed the Mughal forces

under Mirzā Isfandiyār who had advanced near the capital. Although far superior in numbers the Tripura forces were defeated with heavy loss and Jasomānikya was forced to retreat towards his capital. In course of his retreat he came upon the Mughal forces advancing from the west under Mirzā Nūr al-Dīn and Mūsā Khān and was again defeated. His attempt to check the advance of the Mughal fleet similarly failed and the two divisions of the Mughal army captured the capital Udaipur early in November 1618. Jasomānikya tried to escape to Arakan but was pursued and captured with his family. Tripura was annexed to the Bengal *sūbah* and the Mughal commanders returned to Dacca towards the end of November with the royal captive and a number of elephants.<sup>1</sup>

Ibrāhīm Khān could not, however, follow up this success by an immediate attack upon the Arakanese stronghold of Chittagong because affairs in the north-east once again engrossed his attention. Rājā Satrajit of Bhusnā (parts of Jessore and Faridpur) who had submitted to Islām Khān and had been then enlisted in the Mughal army and posted as a *thānadār* in Kāmrup, now proved faithless and entered into treasonable contacts with Bali Nārāyan and his protector, the Ahom king.<sup>2</sup> Satrajit secretly aided Bali Nārāyan's war preparations in Darrang district and also instigated an Ahom chief named Shumarū to launch a sudden attack on the Mughal post at Hāngrābārī. To facilitate this move Satrajit treacherously induced Ibrāhīm Khān's *bakhshī* (Paymaster - General of the forces), who had gone on an inspection of the troops there, to bring out them from the fort. As this was done, the Assamese forces, on the indication of Satrajit, suddenly fell upon the Hāngrābārī fort and captured it without much effort. The fort was set on fire by them and about seven hundred Mughal troops were killed as they made a disadvantageous attempt to dislodge the Assamese. They were ultimately forced to withdraw.<sup>3</sup> Satrajit's treacherous conduct was not yet known so that he escaped any immediate punishment. Encouraged by him

<sup>1</sup> B.G. II, 628.

<sup>2</sup> S.N. Bhattacharyya, *A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*, Calcutta, 1929, 245.

<sup>3</sup> B.G. I., 409-410; II., 623-24, 665.

Bali Nārāyan also made a number of daring raids into Kāmrūp in order to oust the Mughals from there. He did not succeed in doing so only because of the timely arrival of reinforcements sent by Ibrāhīm Khān.

In the meantime the Arakan king did not sit idle. He strengthened his position by capturing the island of Sondip from Gonzales and early in 1620 renewed his raid on south Bengal. With a large fleet of war-boats he suddenly came up the Meghna river plundering the villages on its banks and reached as far as the island of Bāghāchār, a few miles south of Dacca. Ibrāhīm Khān promptly advanced against him initially with only 32 war-boats and was quickly joined by the main body of his fleet and about 8000 cavalry under Mūsā Khān and other generals. The Arakan king did not dare engage in battle with the Mughal forces and quickly withdrew. Ibrāhīm Khān now decided to undertake the long-deferred expedition against Chittagong. Early in March 1621 he started with an well-equipped army from the new base in Tripura, leaving the fleet in the Big Feni river. It appears that he intended to appear suddenly before Chittagong and to avoid any naval engagement on the way, particularly as the Arakanese had now a powerful base at Sondip. But the plan failed mainly because of the difficulty of passage through the hilly and forest region across Tripura. The cavalry and the elephants could not advance easily through the inaccessible forests and at last, being faced with scarcity of food supplies and pestilence in the army Ibrāhīm Khān was forced to withdraw.<sup>1</sup> Clearly the campaign was ill-planned and it could not even reach as far as Sītākunda which had been the scene of the last battle between the Arakanese and the Mughal forces sent by Ibrāhīm Khān's predecessor Qāsim Khān.

The failure of the Chittagong expedition had its immediate repercussion in the renewal of raids by the Arakan king. In mid-August of the same year (1621) he made a quick raid on the island of Dakhin Shāhbāzpur in the mouth of the Meghna river (now forming a part of the Barisal district) and plundered it. As soon as Ibrāhīm Khān approached the quarter with a fleet,

<sup>1</sup> B.G. II., 632-633.



however, the former hurriedly withdrew. For a time after this event the Arakan king was kept busy by the enmity of the Burmese ruler. The Portuguese pirates carried on their depredations however in the coastal region. On one occasion they came upto southern Jessore, plundered the villages and went off with 1500 men and women as captives.<sup>1</sup> Once again Ibrāhīm Khān personally led a fleet of war-boats to deal with the danger, but before he could find his way to Jessore through the labyrinthian water-routes of southern Bengal, the pirates had already made their escape to safety in the further south.

About the same time Bahādur Khān of Hijli (south-eastern Midnapur), who had revolted and then submitted during Qāsim Khān's viceroyalty, once again rose in rebellion. He intrigued with Mukarram Khān, the Mughal governor of Orissa, and received support from him. From Jessore Ibrāhīm Khān sent his nephew Mirzā Aḥmad Beg with a strong force against Bahādur Khān, and also asked the *faujdar* of Burdwan, Muhammad Beg Abakash, to join in the attack on him. In the meantime Mukarram Khān of Orissa withdrew his support from Bahādur Khan. The latter found it impossible to resist the combined attack and sued for peace. He came personally to Jessore to render his submission to Ibrāhīm Khan who pardoned him and reinstated him in his *jāgīr*, but imposed upon him a fine of 300,000 rupees for his disloyalty.<sup>2</sup>

For about two years after this till the appearance of the rebellious Prince Shāh Jahān in November 1623 Bengal witnessed relative peace except for the sporadic outbreaks of disloyalty in Kāmrūp which were duly suppressed by Shaikh Kamāl, who had been posted there. Early in 1623, however, he died in Kāmrūp. He was one of the most experienced Mughal officers who had been serving in Bengal since Islām' Khān's time. Ibrāhīm Khān assigned Shaikh Kamāl's *jāgīr* and office to his eldest son Shaikh Shāh Muhammad and sent him to Kāmrūp with an increase in his rank. Shaikh Kamāl's death was followed by the loss of another great person, Mūsā Khān, who died of an illness in April of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 635.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 631-632, 636-637.

same year. Ibrāhīm Khān selected the deceased leader's young son, Ma'sūm Khān, aged about 19 years, as successor to his father's position and estates.<sup>1</sup> The viceroy also retained in service Mūsā Khān's other officers like Khwāja Chānd, the minister, 'Ādil Khān, the admiral, and others. The year 1623 was, however, the worst year for Ibrāhīm Khān who was soon to face the rebellious Prince Shāh Jahān.

### III: PRINCE SHĀH JAHĀN IN BENGAL AND AFTER

Towards the end of 1622 (1031) Prince Shāh Jahān rose in rebellion in the Deccan. He was the third and the ablest son of Jahāngīr and was marked out as his successor to the throne. As early as 1617 Shāh Jahān was invested with the unprecedented rank of "30,000 *dhāt* and 20,000 *sawar*" and was also decorated with the title of "Shāh Jahān", his original name being Prince Khurram. The prospects of his peaceful succession were blurred, however, by the ambitious manœuvres of the Queen Nūr Jahān.<sup>2</sup> The process started in 1621 when her father, I'timād al-Daulah, the real brain behind the so-called "Nūr Jahān clique", died. To make matters worse, Jahāngīr's health sharply declined since the beginning of 1622. Nūr Jahān now became anxious to maintain her pre-eminent position by some realignment of the court clique. She gave her daughter Ladlī Begam, born of her previous husband Sher Afghan, in marriage with Jahāngīr's fifth son Prince Shahryār and took steps to ensure the latter's succession to the throne. In the meantime Shāh 'Abbās of Persia had attacked and captured Qandahar. Shāh Jahān was now asked to proceed thither. The latter suspected that it was an attempt on the queen's part to keep him away from the capital at that critical juncture of Jahāngīr's illness. Accordingly Shāh Jahān came upto Malwa and from there excused himself from marching further on the ground of the rainy season. Moreover, to strengthen his position he asked for adding to his *jāgīr* the strategic *parganā* of Dholpur, lying some 80 miles from Agra on the left bank of the Chambal river.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 680.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the causes of Shāh Jahān's rebellion see B. P. Saksena, *History of Shah Jahan of Delhi*, Allahabad, 1932, Chap. I. See also *Riyāz*, 180-183.

The queen checkmated this demand of Shāh Jahān's by persuading Jahāngīr to confer the *parganā* on Sharyār. Shāh Jahān, however, took possession of the *parganā* and in this act a conflict took place between his men and those of Shahryār. Shāh Jahān attempted to explain matters by sending Afḍal Khān, son of Abū al-Faḍl, with a letter to Jahāngīr, but the latter, under Nūr Jahān's influence, refused an audience to the messenger. Shāh Jahān was now deprived of his *jāgīrs* in the *sarkārs* of Hisar Firuzah and Doab near Delhi which were transferred instead to Shahryār, and was further told that "the Subahs of the Dakhin, and Gujarat and Malwa, were bestowed on him, and that he might rule over them, making his headquarters within those limits wherever he pleased." Shāh Jahān was also asked to send to court the important generals and their contingents with him on the ground of their being required for the Qandahar expedition. This Shāh Jahān was the most unwilling to do, particularly as he came to learn that other veteran generals including Mahābat Khān, who had been posted at Kābul, were also recalled to the capital obviously for a show-down on the question of succession. Shāh Jahān made a last attempt at reconciliation by sending Qādī 'Abd al-'Azīz to court, but the latter was refused access to the emperor's presence, and Mahābat Khān was directed to arrest him. This proved too much for Shāh Jahān who now unfurled the standard of rebellion.

Shāh Jahān proceeded with his army towards the capital but was defeated in an engagement near Agra by the emperor's forces under Mahābat Khān and Prince Parvez. Shāh Jahān then withdrew to Mandu in Malwa where he was pursued by Mahābat Khān and Prince Parvez who defeated him in another battle across the river Narbada. The rebellious prince then crossed the Tapti and thence went to Bijāpur and Aḥmadnagar. Being unable to gather any support at those places he next proceeded towards Orissa and Bengal. When he reached Orissa, its governor Aḥmad Beg (Ibrāhīm Khān's nephew) quickly retreated first to Cuttack and then to Bengal obviously because he thought it impossible with his small force to oppose Shāh Jahān. The latter occupied Orissa without any opposition and made arrangements for its administration on his behalf. While at Cuttack an envoy of the

governor of the Portuguese settlement at Hugli met him and presented him with rare gifts and some elephants<sup>1</sup>. It was merely a diplomatic move on the part of the Portuguese and did not bring any promise of their support for Shāh Jahān. From Orissa he moved into south-west Bengal where the *faujdar* of Burdwan, Mirzā Šālih, offered some resistance but was easily overcome and arrested. The prince then advanced towards Akbarnagar (Rajmahal).

As soon as Ibrāhīm Khān came to know about Shāh Jahān's advance into Bengal, he made preparations for immediately marching towards Rajmahal. He left his personal assistant Khwāja Idrāk with only 500 cavalry and 1000 musketeers for the defence of Dacca, and sent the *bakhshī*, Mirzā Bāqī, with 1000 cavalry for strengthening the various posts in Faridpur, Jessore, etc.<sup>2</sup> as a precautionary measure against the Arakanese and the Portuguese pirates. With the rest of his forces Ibrāhīm Khān marched towards Rajmahal. He had with him at least 6000 cavalry, 100 elephants, a large artillery and three hundred war-boats under Mīr Shams, besides the war-boats of Ma'sūm Khān. A Portuguese adventurer named Manoel Taveres also accompanied the viceroy with a large number of *jāliya* boats.<sup>3</sup> Ibrāhīm Khān marched with all speed so that he reached the vicinity of Rajmahal within only eleven days. Shortly after his arrival at Akbarnagar Ahmad Beg, the Orissa governor, also joined him.<sup>4</sup> As the old fort of Akbarnagar built by Mānsingh lay a little away from the river and was not accessible to the war-boats, Ibrāhīm Khān moved about two miles down the river at Akbarpur (now in Malda) where his son lay buried and took his position there. He fortified the palace and garrisoned it with about 4000 troops commanded by his younger nephew Mirzā Yūsuf, assisted by Jalair Khān, Mirzā Isfandiyār and Mirzā Nūr Allāh. With the rest of the forces the viceroy along with Ahmad Beg took an advance position on the bank of the Ganges, while the fleet took its position on the river. In the meantime Shāh

<sup>1</sup> B.G. II., 688. See also K.M. Karim, *The Provinces of Bengal and Bihar under Shāh Jahān*, Dacca, 1974, 13.

<sup>2</sup> B.G., 690.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II., 690; also Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1919, 59.n.

<sup>4</sup> B.G., II., 689.

Jahān occupied the abandoned fort at Akbarnagar. Before commencing hostilities he attempted to win over the viceroy by offering him, through a messenger, either continued service in Bengal or safe passage back to Delhi. But Ibrāhīm Khān gave a very spirited and dignified reply saying that he would rather die fighting than betray the emperor's cause.<sup>1</sup> Hostilities then started. Shāh Jahān succeeded in sending a contingent under Daryā Khān across the river who defeated Ahmad Beg in a sharp engagement.<sup>2</sup> But the attack on the fort of Akbarpur was repulsed with heavy loss to the rebel forces. Shāh Jahān could not send his main force across the river because of the viceroy's war-fleet. At this stage, however, Shāh Jahān appears to have established contact with the admirals of the fleet, Mīr Shams, Ma'sūm Khān and Taveres who henceforth acted very indifferently<sup>3</sup> so that before long Shāh Jahān's forces, commanded by 'Abd Allah Khān and helped by some local zamindars crossed the river practically unopposed. There were also desertions from the viceroy's army. On 20 April 1624 a severe and hotly contested battle took place in which the viceroy, along with a number of his officers fell fighting. Still the army in the fort held on for some time, but the news of the viceroy's death and the inactivity of the fleet broke down their resistance. The fort was occupied at the end of the day. A large number of the garrison were killed and wounded and the rest escaped with Ahmad Beg, who was also wounded, to Jahāngīrnagar where the fleet also withdrew.

Ibrāhīm Khān's defeat was nothing unnatural. He was merely a provincial governor commanding a subordinate force, while Shāh Jahān was at the head of a far superior force commanded by such veteran generals as 'Abd Allah Khān, Daryā Khān and others. Yet the viceroy's defeat was mainly due to the desertion in his ranks and the treacherous inactivity of the fleet under Mīr Shams, Ma'sūm Khān and Manoel Taveres. It has sometimes been suggested that Ibrāhīm Khān had been initially negligent and that he "failed to take effective and organised steps to check the

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 189.

<sup>2</sup> *B.G.*, II., 692.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 694.

progress of the rebel prince at the first opportune moment and allowed him to enter Midnapur and Burdwan practically unopposed, leaving the local officers to shift for themselves."<sup>1</sup> As an explanation of this assumed negligence on the viceroy's part it is further stated that he was placed in an "embarrassing situation" in that it was a quarrel between the emperor and a prince and that "in such a quarrel it is difficult for a mere servant to follow the right course of action."<sup>2</sup> The criticism is as unwarranted as is the extenuation unnecessary. The situation might have been embarrassing, but there was no hesitation or misgivings in the minds of Ibrāhīm Khān. He did not also leave the local officers to shift for themselves. Ahmad Beg, though his nephew, was not under his jurisdiction, and was the governor of a separate province. The latter came to Bengal, as subsequent events clearly show, to join his forces with those of Ibrāhīm Khān and thus to offer a combined resistance. Ahmad Beg had also asked the Burdwan *faujdar*, Mirzā Šālih, to come with him towards Rajmahal, and it seems the latter would have done well to do so instead of offering an isolated and necessarily feeble resistance and then falling a prisoner in Shāh Jahān's hand. Ahmad Beg's retreat into Bengal and his suggestion to Mirzā Šālih were not intended to facilitate Shāh Jahān's occupation of Bengal, as has been incorrectly assumed. If Ahmad Beg had any sympathy for Shāh Jahān, he could have easily gone over to his side, as many veteran generals and officers had done. On his part Ibrāhīm Khān was not expected to go out of his province to intercept Shāh Jahān whose movement before his entry into Bengal could not have been clearly foreseen by the viceroy. Nor did he make any delay in marching against the rebel prince. In fact as soon as he came to know that the latter was heading towards Bengal Ibrāhīm Khān

<sup>1</sup> S.N. Bhattacharyya in *H.B.* II, 306-307.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* K.M. Karim (*op.cit.*, 14,19) also seems to have adopted Bhattacharyya's equivocal treatment of the episode. Thus, accepting his argument about the "embarrassing situation" etc. Karim says that it "is not unreasonable to accuse Ibrāhīm Khān of indifference, callousness and negligence in taking adequate measures to face the impending situation" (p.14) and then, a little later in his discussion (p.19) Karim further says that "Ibrāhīm Khān did not fulfil his obligation as a commander or an officer whose duty was to take effective measures against all sorts of uprisings, inroads and disturbances." Needless to say that Shāh Jahān's rebellion was not just an internal uprising or disturbance, nor was it an inroad from an external foe for Ibrāhīm Khān.

rushed with his forces towards Rajmahal, on the western border of his jurisdiction, so that Aḥmad Beg, who came to Bengal in advance of the prince, found the viceroy already at Rajmahal and that Shāh Jahān was in reality intercepted at that border post. The allegation of Ibrāhīm Khān's having "scattered" his forces before meeting Shāh Jahān is also ill-founded. There was no scattering of the forces or division of commands at Akbarnagar; and if the allusion is to the viceroy's having left a very small number of forces at Dacca and other places like Faridpur and Jessore, it may be pointed out that it would have been clearly impolitic and disastrous on his part to leave the capital and other posts completely denuded of defensive forces and thus at the mercy of the Arakanese and the Portuguese pirates who had carried on their devastating raids as far as the neighbourhood of Dacca just a few months ago.

After the victory at Akbarpur Shāh Jahān proceeded hurriedly towards Jahāngīrnagar, leaving one of his generals, Rājā Bhīm, in charge of Akbarnagar (Rajmahal). Judging from his subsequent activities it appears that Shāh Jahān's aim in marching to Dacca was three-fold: to capture the immense treasures and war-materials there, to get the submission of Aḥmad Beg and other officers in those parts and to make arrangements for the administration of the province for him. In fact while proceeding by way of Pandua (Malda), Ghoraghat (in Rangpur) and Shāhzādpur (in Pabna) he sent *farmāns* to the *sardārs*, *thānahdārs* and *zamindārs* in various localities asking them to render submission and threatening them with dire consequences in the event of their disobedience. He reached Dacca early in May 1624, where Aḥmad Beg, the family of the late viceroy and others submitted to him and were treated with kindness and consideration, they being after all his relations. He seized, however, a large amount of cash totalling 45 lakhs of rupees of the time, including the personal treasures of the late viceroy and his family, besides the war-materials, 500 elephants, 400 horses and the entire artillery and the war-boats.<sup>1</sup> He also generously rewarded his distin-

<sup>1</sup> *Tuzuk*, 384; *Riyāḍ*, 190.

guished followers and generals with cash and promotions in ranks. For purposes of administration he divided the province into four well-marked zones.<sup>1</sup> Thus eastern Bengal or *Bhāti* was designated a *ṣūbah* and Darab khān, son of 'Abd al-Rahīm Khān-i-Khānān, was appointed *ṣūbahdār* there with Jahāngīrnagar as his headquarters. Kuch Bihar (including Kāmrūp) was designated another *ṣūbah* and Zāhid Khān was appointed its *ṣūbahdār*; Jessore, with other southern districts, were designated another *ṣūbah*, but 'Alī Khān Niyāzī who was placed in charge of it was designated a *sardār* or chief officer, and not a *ṣūbahdār*. Similarly the Akbarnagar region, (Rajmahal-Gaud) which was also designated a *ṣūbah*, was placed under a *sardār*. Rājā Bhīm, who was initially placed there was subsequently transferred to Patna, and then Mirzā Nathan, who was in Sylhet, was transferred to Akbarnagar. Besides these Sylhet, obviously for its strategic importance, was placed under Mirzā Ṣālih (formerly *thānahdār* of Burdwan) with the designation of *sardār*, while Mirzā Bāqī, the *bakhshī* of the late Viceroy, was placed as *thānahdār* of Bhulua. For the whole of Bengal, however, a chief *dīwān*, Mirzā Mulkī, and a chief treasurer, Malik Husain, were appointed. Shāh Jahān also retained in service the admirals of the war-boats, 'Ādil Khān and Pāhār Khān, the former to stay at Dacca, and the latter to accompany him. Shāh Jahān stayed at Dacca only for seven days. During this short time he also received an envoy from the new Arakan ruler Thiri Thudhamma, who had succeeded his father Meng Khamaung in 1622. This was merely a diplomatic move on the part of the Arakan ruler who before long resumed his father's policy of aggressive raids into Bengal as soon as Shāh Jahān retired from the province.

The possession of Bengal did not bring Shāh Jahān any the nearer to the throne of Delhi and he did not mean to stay in the province. Even if he did, that would have only given him a dominion in the east similar to that which he had already been given in the Deccan before his rebellion. Hence he hurried towards the west to effect the conquest of northern India and

<sup>1</sup> B.G. II., 706-710. See also K.M. Karim, *op.cit.*, 39-40.



march upon the capital before Mahābat Khān and Prince Parvez, who had gone to the Deccan in pursuit of him, returned from there. His plans did not succeed; for his father had anticipated his movements and had instructed Mahābat Khān and Parvez to proceed from the south towards Allahabad and Bihar. Hardly had Shāh Jahān completed the conquest of the latter place and arrived near Benares when his further progress was opposed by Mahābat Khān and Parvez. Shāh Jahān wrote to his officers in Bengal for reinforcements. Darab Khān, his *ṣūbahdār* at Jahāngīrnagar, now proved lukewarm in his support; and although he sent his younger son with 100 cavalry and the war-boats under Mīr Shams, Ma'sūm Khān and the Portuguese Taveres, he himself made excuses and did not leave Jahāngīrnagar.<sup>1</sup> Of all the officials in Bengal it was only Mirzā Nathan, the administrator (*sardār*) of Akbarnagar, who remained steadfast in his allegiance to the rebel prince and sent him funds, provisions and ammunitions.<sup>2</sup> The final battle between the opposing forces took place towards the end of October 1624, near Kānti in the Mirzapur district of U.P., on the river Tons. Once again the Bengal fleet under Mīr Shams, Ma'sūm Khān and Taveres played a dubious role and were seduced by Mahābat Khān to leave the prince in the lurch and to withdraw towards Bengal.<sup>3</sup> Shāh Jahān was decisively defeated and was forced to flee towards the east. He came to Akbarnagar early in January 1625 where he stayed for 24 days and, after collecting his baggage and war materials and taking the ladies who had been left there, made off for the Deccan. Under the emperor's orders Mahābat Khān was placed in charge of Bengal, to be assisted by his son Khānahzād Khān. Prince Parvez left for the Deccan in pursuit of Shāh Jahān. Reduced to sore straits, however, the latter ultimately begged pardon of his father which the emperor was only glad to grant in return for Shāh Jahān's surrendering the forts under his control and sending to court as hostages his sons Dārā and Aurangzeb.

Thus Shāh Jahān's rebellion proved abortive, and Jahāngīr's

<sup>1</sup> B.G. II., 737.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 739-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 749-50.

rule was restored in Bengal early in 1625. For the rest of his life, however, Jahāngīr had no peace; neither had Bengal. Mahābat Khān's appointment as viceroy of the province was in fact part of a conspiracy against him. The Queen Nūr Jahān looked with growing suspicion on the concentration of increasing military powers in Mahābat Khān's hand and his association with Prince Parvez. She feared that this combination might jeopardize her son-in-law Shahryār's cause. On the other hand her brother Āṣaf Khān, the most influential noble at court and father-in-law of Shāh Jahān, also disliked the Mahābat Khān - Parvez association for similar reasons. Āṣaf Khān was naturally interested to see his son-in-law succeed to the throne, and for that reason wanted to isolate Mahābat Khān from both Shahryār and Nūr Jahān and, if possible, to draw the general towards Shāh Jahān. Accordingly it so happened that both the brother and the sister first joined in inducing Jahāngīr to appoint Mahābat Khān as viceroy over Bengal and then in bringing various charges of misdeeds against him, including his alleged withholding of the Bengal revenue and war-elephants. On the other hand Mahābat Khān was also being estranged from the emperor on account of his harsh treatment of the followers of Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindī to whom the general was attached. The ultimate breach was precipitated by Nūr Jahān who inflicted inhuman punishment on a person to whom Mahābat Khān's daughter was betrothed. This broke Mahābat Khān's patience. He now marched with his troops from Bengal, effected a bold *coup-de-main* and succeeded in confining the emperor (1626). Nūr Jahān managed to escape, but surrendered subsequently and joined the emperor. Thus was the imperious queen humbled by the ablest commander of the realm. Shortly afterwards, however, the emperor and the queen succeeded in escaping from Mahābat Khān's surveillance and the latter had now no alternative but to flee with his followers towards the Deccan to join Shāh Jahān. The whole episode turned out admirably in favour of Shāh Jahān and in accordance with Āṣaf Khān's desires and diplomacy. There was now a union between the ablest prince and the ablest general in the empire.

Shāh Jahān's rebellion, followed by Mahābat Khān's coup,

had thrown Bengal out of gear. Shortly after Shāh Jahān's departure from Bengal towards northern India the Arakan king made a raid upon Bhulua, plundered the territory and then retired with a rich booty.<sup>1</sup> And when Mahābat Khān was away, the Arakan ruler led another expedition into Bengal, advanced as far as Dacca and, according to one account, "entered the city, burnt and looted it, and retired with a large number of captives."<sup>2</sup> The Arakanese inroad into Dacca appears to have taken place at a time when Khānahzād Khān, who had been deputed in Bengal for his father Mahābat Khān, had been recalled to court in consequence of the latter's rebellion and ultimate escape to the Deccan. Jahāngīr now appointed Mukarram Khān viceroy in Bengal. He was the son of Shaikh Bāyazīd Mu'azzam Khān, grandson of Shaikh Salīm Chīshī, and a son-in-law of Islām Khān, Jahāngīr's late viceroy in Bengal. During Islām Khān's time Mukarram Khān served in Bengal and rendered valuable services, especially in connection with the conquest of Kuch Bihar. Later on he was posted as governor of Orissa. His viceroyalty in Bengal was, however, of short duration. He died early in February 1627 because of an accidental drowning of his boat while he was advancing by the river to receive a royal *farmān*. It was the general practice at that time to advance a few miles, by way of paying ceremonial homage, to receive imperial orders and *farmāns*.

On Mukarram Khān's death Fidā'ī Khān (Mirzā Hedāyat Allah) was sent as viceroy. He was an experienced officer who had previously held for some time the important post of *mīr-i-baḥr-i-nawwāra* or admiral of the fleet. He belonged to Mahābat Khān's group and had even taken his side during his coup; yet Fidā'ī Khān succeeded in retaining the emperor's confidence. It is stated that when he was sent as viceroy it was "settled that every year five *lacs* of rupees as present to the Emperor and five *lacs* of rupees as present to Nūr Jahān Begam - in all ten *lacs* of rupees should be remitted to the Imperial exchequer."<sup>3</sup> This amount was obviously over and above the annual provincial revenues. Soon

<sup>1</sup> B.G. II.

<sup>2</sup> Talish's *Continuation*, 154b, 176, quoted in H.B. II., 314.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 208; M.U. III, 12.

after Fidā'ī Khān's arrival in Bengal, however, Jahāngīr died on 27 Şafar 1037/29 October 1627. The new emperor Shāh Jahān replaced Fidā'ī Khān by Qāsim Khān II.

## BENGAL DURING SHĀH JAHĀN'S REIGN

Three of Jahāngīr's five sons died before him and he was survived by his third son Shāh Jahān and fifth son Shahryār. In the ordinary course, therefore, Shāh Jahān would have succeeded to the throne; but he had complicated his position by rebelling against his father and by staying in the Deccan till the latter's death. On the other hand Nūr Jahān attempted to place her son-in-law Sharyār on the throne, and took steps to arrest her brother Āṣaf Khān, Shāh Jahān's father-in-law, and 'Azam Khān, the *Mīr-i-Bakhshī*, "both of whom were pillars of the empire and obstacles to her plans."<sup>1</sup> Āṣaf Khān frustrated her moves and sent a quick messenger to Shāh Jahān asking him to come to the north in all haste. At the same time Āṣaf Khān got hold of Dāwar Bakhsh, a son of the late prince Khusrau, and had him proclaimed as emperor as a stop-gap measure. Nūr Jahān could easily see through the game and instigated her son-in-law to proclaim himself as emperor as well at Lahore. Thus for a time there were two emperors. But Shahryār was incapable and worthless, and was easily defeated and captured by an army sent by Āṣaf Khān in the name of Dāwar Bakhsh. The influential nobles were also won over by Āṣaf Khān. Shahryār was imprisoned and blinded. In the meantime Shāh Jahān arrived in the north and triumphantly entered the capital on 28 January 1628. Dāwar Bakhsh, the "sacrificial lamb", was imprisoned and was later allowed to withdraw to Persia. Nūr Jahān also retired from public life. Although she had plotted against Shāh Jahān, he treated her well and granted her a suitable pension. Āṣaf Khān, who had rendered so valuable services to Shāh Jahān, was rewarded with huge gifts and honours.

Shāh Jahān's reign of thirty years (1628-1658) was marked by peace and prosperity in the Mughal empire and this was well reflected in Bengal. This is specially notable, for, if Jahāngīr's reign saw the suppression of the Afghan chiefs and other

<sup>1</sup> M.U., I, p.289.

zamindars and the consequent consolidation of the Mughal power in the province, Shāh Jahān's reign witnessed the restoration of security of life and property, particularly in lower Bengal, by the capture of Hugli from the Portuguese and the closure of their slave trade and other piratical activities at that place.

I: VICEROYALTY OF QĀSIM KHĀN (1628—1632) AND  
THE CAPTURE OF HUGLI FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

Shortly after his accession Shāh Jahān replaced Fidā'ī Khān by his own nominee Qāsim Khān as viceroy in Bengal. He was a son of Mīr Murād who migrated from his original home in Baihaq to India during the reign of Akbar. The latter appointed him to train up prince Khurram (Shāh Jahān) in archery, and subsequently appointed him *bakhshī* of Lahore. Mīr Murād's son Qāsim Khān served in Bengal as *khājanchī* (Treasurer-General) during the viceroyalty of Islām Khān Chīshtī. Later on Qāsim Khān got married to Manījah Begam, empress Nūr Jahān's sister and came closer to emperor Jahāngīr who appointed him viceroy at Agra. "The witty courtiers of the time called him Qāsim Khān Manījah".<sup>1</sup> As Abdus Salam points out,<sup>2</sup> "Qāsim Khān" was evidently his title, his actual name is not given in the sources. The most notable event of his viceroyalty was the capture of Hugli from the Portuguese which proved to be a definite check to their piratical operations in south Bengal.

(a) *The Portuguese in Bengal*

The Portuguese supremacy in the eastern waters began with Vasco-da-Gama's arrival at Calicut on the western coast of India in 1498. His predecessors had already tracked the route along the west African coast upto the Cape of Good Hope. He rounded the Cape and found his way from Madagascar to Calicut with the help of an Arab Muslim pilot named Aḥmad ibn Mājed. It was not before 1518, however, that the first Portuguese agent, Joao Coelho, arrived at Chittagong on the Bengal coast. The same year the Portuguese chief on the west Indian coast (Goa) sent Dom

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, p.209, n.1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Joao de Silveria with four ships on a formal mission to Chittagong. Silveria made his position difficult by piratically capturing on the way some ships belonging to a Muslim merchant named Ghulām 'Alī who was related to the Chittagong governor.<sup>1</sup> The Portuguese visitor was therefore naturally taken to be a pirate; and after a hard time he had to return to western India without attaining any fruitful result. The next Portuguese agent to arrive at Chittagong was Ruy Vaz Pereira who reached there in 1526. He also captured on the way a vessel belonging to a Chittagong-based Persian merchant named Khwāja Shihāb-al-Dīn under the pretext that the latter had fitted up his vessel after the Portuguese pattern with a view to committing piracy and then transfixing the blame on the Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> The pretext, besides being an indirect confession of the fact that the Portuguese were wont to commit piracy in the eastern waters, indicates that Khwāja Shihāb al-Dīn probably did so in order to avoid such Portuguese piratical attacks on his ships. Be that as it may, he found his rescue in the third but rather unintentional Portuguese arrival in 1528. Martim Affonso de Mello Jusarte, with some of his associates, were blown off by storm from the Indian ocean and were ship-wrecked on the coast of Pegu (Burma). From there they were taken by some fishermen to southern Chittagong (Chakaria) where Khuda Bakhsh Khān, a local chief, is said to have first used their services in a quarrel with one of his neighbours and then put them under restraint. Khwāja Shihāb al-Dīn now came forward to intercede for them, had them released, and in return got back his captured vessel. It was at Khwāja Shihāb al-Dīn's suggestion that the Portuguese authorities at Goa sent another formal trading mission to Bengal in 1533, with five ships and two hundred men headed by Martim Affonso de Mello Jusarte. This mission too had a bad start because of Jusarte's attempt to smuggle the cargo of his ship into Chittagong without paying the usual customs, and a worse finish because the presents which he sent with an envoy to the Husain Shāhī Sultān Maḥmūd Shāh at Gaud were found to be goods belonging to a

<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1919, p.30-31.

Muslim merchantman recently plundered by the notorious Portuguese pirate Damiao Bernaldes. Jusarte had not even taken care to remove the labels of the original owner from the packets.<sup>1</sup> Consequently the Sultān drew the obvious conclusion and threw the envoy into prison and also asked his Chittagong viceroy to apprehend the other Portuguese there. The viceroy, perhaps to avoid any serious armed conflict with the rather large body of 200 Portuguese manning the five ships, had recourse to a stratagem. He invited Jusarte and about forty of his associates to a party and then had them arrested. Nevertheless they offered resistance and ten of them were killed in the process. In retaliation the Portuguese authorities at Goa sent in 1534 a powerful fleet under Antonio de Silva Menzes who, after some attempt at negotiation, attacked and set fire to Chittagong and killed a large number of the civilian population of the city.

It was not however this demonstration of their naval power but a change in the political situation in Bengal which soon changed Mahmūd Shāh's attitude to the Portuguese. As noted before, the Afghan hero Sher Shāh was about that time pressing menacingly on Bengal and in the face of that danger Mahmūd Shah frantically sought new allies.<sup>2</sup> When therefore another Portuguese mission arrived at Sāt-gāon in 1535 the Bengal Sultān treated it with marked favour and also released the Portuguese prisoners. Martin Affonso de Mello Jusarte thus "suddenly found himself in the honoured position of a military adviser of the king of Bengal".<sup>3</sup> The Portuguese military assistance was, however, neither adequate nor timely to save Mahmūd, and he was finally defeated by the Afghans and died of his wounds in 1538. Before that, however, he had granted permission for the Portuguese to establish trading stations at Chittagong and Sāt-gāon.<sup>4</sup>

From the date of Sher Shāh's occupation of Bengal (1538) till the final establishment of the Mughal sway (1613) the country passed, as already noticed, through a period of political instability

<sup>1</sup> R.S. Whiteway, *The Rise of the Portuguese Power in India*, Westminster, 1899, p.233.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> S.N. Sen in *H.B.* II, p.358.

<sup>4</sup> Campos, *op.cit.*, p.39.



and transition characterized by the rise of independent Afghan chiefs and other zamindars.<sup>1</sup> And it was precisely this same troublous period which witnessed the height of Portuguese activities in the coastal regions of Bengal as in the other regions of south and south-east Asia. The local situation favoured the Portuguese. Shortly after Sher Shāh's death Chittagong passed under the control of the Arakanese king. The Portuguese did not always pull on well with him. Hence they turned their attention more and more towards the southern districts of Bengal where they found new allies in the petty chiefs who rose on the ruins of the Afghan Sultanat. In 1559 Rājā Paramānanda of Bāklā (Barisal) concluded a subordinate alliance with them. "In lieu of the military cooperation, which the Portuguese promised him in his wars against his neighbours, Paramānanda agreed to pay an annual tribute in a specified quantity of rice, butter, oil, tar, sugar and the finger products of the loom,"<sup>2</sup> and also to allow them other trading facilities in his territory. His successor Rājā Rāmchandra had in his service "a captain and other people of Portuguese extraction and Christian faith"<sup>3</sup> under whose influence he granted permission in 1599 for the Portuguese Christian missionary of the Society of Jesus, Melchoir da Fonseca, to erect churches and make Christians there.<sup>4</sup> Rāmchandra's father-in-law, Pratāpāditya of Jessore (Chandecan) also employed Portuguese adventurers in his service, specially in the fitting up of his fleet of war-boats. He also provided them with funds and a site to establish a Christian church in his territory. Kedār Rāi of Śrīpur (Dacca), one of the *Bāra Bhuiyāns*, too, welcomed the services of the Portuguese. It was one such Portuguese adventurer in his employ, Domingo Carvalho, who conquered the island of Sondip in 1592 by suppressing its Muslim inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Carvalo then threw off Kedār Rāi's overlordship, and with the help of another Portuguese adventurer named Metros established Portuguese

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, chaps. XIV & XV.

<sup>2</sup> S.N. Sen in *H.B.* II, p. 358.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>4</sup> Beveridge, *District of Bakarganj*, pp. 31, 175-177.

<sup>5</sup> When Caesar Frederick visited the island in 1569 he found it inhabited by Muslims under a "Moor king" - *Purchas, His Pilgrims*, Vol. X, p. 137.

supremacy over the island. For this achievement both Carvalho and Metros were rewarded by the king of Portugal with the "Knighthood of the Order of Christ" and the rank of "Gentlemen of the Royal Household".<sup>1</sup> The Portuguese possession of the Sondip island was, however, short-lived; for in the same year (1602) the Arakanese king attacked and defeated the Portuguese at Dianga, opposite Chittagong, and then sent a large fleet to expel them from Sondip. Thus pressed by the Arakanese and also by the Muslim population of the island Carvalho abandoned it shortly afterwards and retired to Śrīpur with some of his followers, while the rest of the Portuguese and the native Christians betook themselves to the friendly courts of Bakla and Chandikan.<sup>2</sup>

After Carvalho's withdrawal, Sondip passed under the control of one Fath Khān. How he came to be the master of the island is not clear. He is stated to have been formerly a captain in the Portuguese employ. Most probably he was alienated from the latter by their harsh treatment of the Muslims of the island and, likelier still, was probably set up by the Arakanese king to drive out the Portuguese from that place. The rise of Fath Khān in Sondip, however, coincided with the appearance in the scene of a cruel and fierce Portuguese pirate named Sebastio Gonzales Tibau. He carried on his plundering raids on innocent merchantmen as well as on the lands near Sondip. Fath Khān decided to suppress these activities and in 1609 made a surprise naval attack on Gonzales and his party when they were busy dividing their spoils on the island of Shāhbāzpur (Barisal) within the jurisdiction of the Bāklā Rājā. In the fight that followed, however, Fath Khān was defeated and killed. Gonzales then invaded Sondip and occupied it. "In this enterprise, as in his earlier buccaneering exploits, he relied not a little on the support of the friendly Raja of Bāklā. The spoils of his piracy used to be disposed of in the Raja's country.... The Raja sent two hundred horsemen and some armed boats to help Gonzales in the conquest of Sandwip on condition that the revenue of the island would be equally shared by the two

<sup>1</sup> *H.B.* II, p.361.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

allies."<sup>1</sup> Far from abiding by this agreement, Gonzales next treacherously snatched the islands of Shāhbāzpur and Patalbhāngā from the Bāklā Rājā. Gonzales next attempted to encroach upon the jurisdiction of the Arakanese ruler but was beaten back. In the meantime the Mughals under Islām Khān Chishtī had succeeded in breaking down the Afghan resistance and had established the Mughal authority throughout Bengal including the territories of the Jessore (Chandikan), Bāklā and Bhulua Rājās.<sup>2</sup> This progress of the Mughal arms was naturally viewed with concern by both the Arakanese king and the Portuguese freebooters who, as noted earlier, temporarily patched up their differences and managed to make in 1614 a joint raid on the Mughal post in Bhulua (Noakhali).<sup>3</sup> The alliance of convenience broke up in the midst of the campaign and both of them withdrew to their respective positions. As a sequel to this renewed misunderstanding between the two, the Arakanese king captured Sondip from Gonzales in 1616. After this that "romantic ruffian" disappeared from the arena of history.

The establishment of the Mughal authority over the southern districts of Jessore-Khulna (Chandikan), Barisal (Bāklā) and Bhulua (Noakhali) did indeed deprive the Portuguese of their "friendly" bases for piratical operations, but these were by no means totally stopped. After Gonzales' final discomfiture at the hands of the Arakanese king the Portuguese in the eastern coasts of Bengal tacitly acknowledged the latter's supremacy and had recourse to Chittagong as their main base of operation. The Arakanese king, though he did not allow Portuguese highhandedness in his own territory, appears to have connived at or even encouraged their piratical raids on Bengal, if only to create trouble for the Mughal authorities. Moreover, the Portuguese had in the later half of the 16th century established various trading posts and factories at Dacca, Barisal, Jessore, Hugli and other places which were not closed. These were established for regular trading activities and with the consent of the local authorities. In fact the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 308, 310-312.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, pp. 328-329.

factory at Hugli was established around 1580 by obtaining a *farmān* from emperor Akbar<sup>1</sup> in order to replace Sāt-gāon which was becoming difficult of approach by ships because of a change in the mainstream of the river. A great volume of trade did indeed pass through these places. Caesar Frederick who visited Bengal in 1567 noted that at Sāt-gāon alone thirty to thirty-five big and small ships were each year laden with "Rice, Cloth of Bombast and of diverse sorts of Lacca, great abundance of Sugar, Mirabolans, dried and preserved, Long Pepper, Oyle of Zerzeline, and many other sorts of merchandize."<sup>2</sup> But more often than not the Portuguese traders mixed up regular with irregular dealings; and those of them who were stationed at the various places in Bengal were in general privy to the piratical operations of the freebooters. After the capture of Noakhali, Barisal and Jessore by the Mughals Hugli became the main den of the Portuguese pirates where their spoils and plunder were disposed of and where their captives were sold as slaves.

The Portuguese freebooters committed inhuman atrocities in lower Bengal. Besides plundering its wealth and manufactures they carried away thousands of men, women and children and sold them as slaves or forcibly converted them to Christianity. Innocent boatmen, traders and travellers lived in constant terror of the "Feringi" pirates. As noted earlier, during Ibrāhīm Khān's viceroyalty they carried away fifteen hundred men and women by one raid into Jessore.<sup>3</sup> Between 1621 and 1624 they carried away 42,000 persons, of whom 28,000 were made Christians, and the rest were reduced to slavery.<sup>4</sup> When the port of Hugli was captured in 1632, 10,000 persons were rescued by the Mughals from the Portuguese confinement. The Portuguese pirates practised inhuman and barbarous tortures on their captives. Shihāb al-Dīn Tālīsh, a contemporary observer, writes :

They carried off Hindus and Muslims, male and female, great and small, few and many, that they could seize, pierced the palms of their hands, passed thin canes through the holes, and threw them one above another

<sup>1</sup> *Akbarnāma*, III. p.243, 320; Campos, *op. cit.*, p.54.

<sup>2</sup> Purchas, *His Pilgrims*, Vol. X., pp 113-114.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 337.

<sup>4</sup> Campos, *op cit.*, p.105.

under the deck of their ships. In the same manner as grain is flung to fowl, every morn and evening they threw down from above uncooked rice to the captives as food. On their return to their homes, they employed the few hard-lived captives that survived [this treatment], with great disgrace and insult in tillage and other hard tasks, according to their power. Others were sold to the Dutch, English and French merchants at the ports of the Deccan... Only the Feringi pirates sold their prisoners. But the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of service. Many high-born persons and Sayyads, many pure and Sayyad-born women, were compelled to undergo the disgrace of the slavery service or concubinage (*farash wa suhbat*) of these wicked men. Muslims underwent such oppression in this region of war (*dār-ul-harb*) as they had not to suffer in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The Portuguese high-handedness in Bengal was neither peculiar nor exceptional. The lack of effective local naval power, the encouragement by the Arakanese king and such other local situation did indeed prove to be contributory factors, but the Portuguese atrocities in Bengal were in essence only a reflection of the nature of their activities in all the other countries which they visited. Wherever they went they carried with them the sword and the fire in their quest for commerce and proselytization to Christianity; and in general they did not draw any scrupulous distinction between trade and piracy. They also regarded human beings and their manufactures as equally lucrative articles of trade to be obtained by hook or by crook. They were particularly ill-disposed towards Muslims mainly for two reasons. The Portuguese had waged a long and bitter crusade against the "Moors" in north Africa and they "carried with them to the East something of the same zeal and the same hostility to all the Muslims"<sup>2</sup> whom they generally termed as "Moors". Secondly, till the 16th century of the Christian era the carrying trade in the Indian ocean were mostly in Muslim hands. When the Portuguese entered that region, therefore, they found the Muslims as their principal rivals in the commercial field too. Hence the Portuguese captains made it their particular object to strike at and drive the Muslim merchantmen out of the Indian ocean. To these may be added two more general causes. The Portuguese push towards the

<sup>1</sup> Bod. MSS 589, tr. by Sarkar in J.A.S.B., 1907, p.422.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford History of India*, 3rd edition, 1961 reprint, p.330.

east coincided with a revival of religious fanaticism in the Iberian Peninsula born out of the "Counter-Reformation", the establishment of the "Inquisition", etc. Every Portuguese of the time tended to consider himself as a champion of the new spirit and nothing appeared unfair to him if the object of extending "Christian dominion" and securing Christian converts was achieved. Secondly, the early Portuguese explorers in the eastern waters of the Atlantic along the African coast created a pattern and a tradition for their successors. The early explorers used to send raiding parties in the western coastlands of Africa to bring in captives of all ages and sexes, the more intelligent of whom were pressed into service as guides and interpreters, while the rest of them were sold as slaves.<sup>1</sup> Much of the Portuguese misdeeds in Bengal, as one writer correctly points out, was "due to lawless habits contracted with impunity in the congenial climes of the 'dark' continent."<sup>2</sup>

(b) *Qāsim Khān captures Hugli (1632)*

The Portuguese activities in Bengal indicated above were sufficient reasons for any settled government to intervene and put a stop to them. And now that the Mughals had brought the whole of Bengal (except Chittagong) under their control, it was only a question of time that they would turn their serious attention to the depredations of the Portuguese as also those of the Maghs (Arakanese). In fact the question had already forced itself on the attention of the viceroy Ibrāhīm Khān who, as noted above,<sup>3</sup> had to take precautionary measures against both these foes before marching from Dacca to meet the then rebellious prince Shāh Jahān. The latter's action against the Portuguese after his accession to the throne was therefore nothing unusual. In fact while staying in the Deccan he had also come to know much about the Portuguese high-handedness in those quarters. Therefore shortly after his accession he wrote to the Portuguese authorities at Goa complaining of their conduct, especially their capture of the

<sup>1</sup> Prestage, *The Portuguese Pioneers*, p.101, quoted in *H.B.* II, p.354.

<sup>2</sup> S.N. Sen in *ibid.*, p.354.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p.340.

vessels of his subjects, and asking them to make restitution of those captured, or else to face expulsion from their bases in south India.<sup>1</sup> Early in 1629 he even got in touch with the English East India Company's agents in India seeking their help in his projected reprisal against the Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> Because of their rivalry with the latter, the English factors seem to have been well disposed to Shāh Jahān's request, but they did not render any active help for want of sufficient means. Nevertheless Shāh Jahān sent an expedition against Goa, Daman and Diu which could not, however, achieve its object on account of the outbreak of an epidemic in the Mughal army. Shāh Jahān did not give up the task and he next turned his attention to the Portuguese in Bengal.

The action against the Portuguese at Hugli was thus a part of Shāh Jahān's wider policy of regulating the Portuguese activities throughout the Mughal empire. Yet some special reasons have been adduced for Qāsim Khān's capture of Hugli. F.J. Cabral, a Jesuit Christian missionary who was present at Hugli at the time of its siege and who took part in the Portuguese defence, attributes a personal motive to the emperor. It is stated that while in Bengal as a rebel against his father, Shāh Jahān had been offended by the Portuguese unwillingness to give him open support and also, later on, by the action of the Portuguese adventurer Manoel Taveres who deserted him on the eve of the battle of Tons,<sup>3</sup> retiring to Bengal with the fleet of war-boats and, further, plundering on the way some boats laden with riches belonging to the prince (Shāh Jahān) and carrying away some of his female servants including two slave girls of Mumtāz Mahal's.<sup>4</sup> Also, the Portuguese authorities in Bengal had not sent congratulatory presents to Shāh Jahān on his accession to the throne. It has further been suggested that Mumtāz Mahal pressed the emperor for the recovery of the girls and induced him to issue orders for the capture of Hugli.<sup>5</sup> The incidents of Manoel Taveres' desertion and plundering were true, and these were reasonable grounds for the emperor to be

<sup>1</sup> Hague Transcripts, Series I, Vol. IX, No. 296, quoted in *E.F.I.*, 1624-29, p.329.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1624-29, pp.327-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 345.

<sup>4</sup> *Manrique*, Vol. II, p.394.

<sup>5</sup> *Manucci, Storia do Mogor*, Vol. I., p.182.

offended; but the fact that on accession to the throne he turned his immediate attention rather to the Portuguese in south India and that the expedition against Hugli was not undertaken till the fifth year of his reign and one year after the death of Mumtāz Mahal herself suggests that the above mentioned incidents could have been, if at all, only of remote consideration with the emperor. More important were, no doubt, the political and religious causes. These are also indicated by Cabral. Politically Hugli was fast becoming a powerful centre of Portuguese activities. On the eve of Shāh Jahān's accession the Portuguese settlers and their half-breed allies and servants at Hugli numbered more than ten thousand. They possessed superior fire-arms and were backed by the then unrivalled naval power. They were also in league with the Arakan-based Portuguese pirates in respect of the disposal of their booty and slaves at Hugli. Moreover the Portuguese at Hugli were helping the Arakan king, the traditional enemy of the Mughals in Bengal, with mercenaries and ammunition for his repeated incursions into Bengal. All these necessarily created serious misgivings in the mind of Shāh Jahān who, as Cabral puts it, "could not but conceive great fears lest His Majesty of Spain should possess himself of the Kingdom of Bengal."<sup>1</sup> The religious high-handedness of the Portuguese was also an equally weighty consideration with the emperor. It is of course far from the truth that Shāh Jahān was actuated by a desire to propagate Islam at the cost of Christianity, as Cabral characteristically suggests.<sup>2</sup> Cabral's own admission elsewhere shows that no impediment was placed by the Mughal authorities in the way of peaceful preaching of Christianity in the Mughal dominions;<sup>3</sup> and the incident of Shāh Jahān's offering the Portuguese prisoners, after the capture of Hugli, the alternatives of conversion to Islam or imprisonment was obviously a retaliatory action against the latter's forcible carrying away of Muslims and their conversion to Christianity, for the other Christian nations, such as the English and the Dutch were at the same time left alone or even favoured at the court and

<sup>1</sup> *Manrique*, Vol. II, p.395.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.393.



the Portuguese themselves were allowed to return to Hugli shortly afterwards.<sup>1</sup> The fact was that Shāh Jahān wanted to put a stop to the forcible carrying away and conversion of his subjects to Christianity by the Portuguese. The unanimous statements of the contemporary Mughal historians, coupled with a little careful analysis of Cabral's statements and the now almost universally recognized fact that the Portuguese in those days attempted to propagate Christianity by force should leave no room for doubt about Shāh Jahān's motive in this respect. Indeed this is all the more clear from the peace negotiations which Cabral himself conducted on behalf of the Portuguese on the eve of the commencement of hostilities. Thus he records that in response to the Portuguese overtures for peaceful settlement the Mughal authorities, besides complaining about the Portuguese help to the Arakan king, demanded the surrender of all persons forcibly confined at Hugli for their conversion to Christianity, and that some ninety persons so confined and converted to Christianity were in fact surrendered in one batch,<sup>2</sup> though this did not eventually lead to any peaceful settlement. Thus the religious cause for the Mughal reprisal on the Hugli Portuguese was no less important. It would therefore be incorrect to say, as one modern writer has done, that the religious element was of subsidiary importance and that "it was imported into the quarrel by Shāh Jahān for reasons of policy."<sup>3</sup> Neither the Portuguese nor the Mughal authorities of the time were as non-religious or "secular" as some moderners would have us believe.

The expedition against Hugli was undertaken in 1042/1632. In planning it Qāsim Khān appears to have intended to concentrate troops near Hugli without arousing the suspicion of the Portuguese and to block the river passage down the settlement in order to prevent their escape towards the seas or the arrival of help from Goa or Arakan. Hence he sent one contingent of the army under Bahādur Kāmbu, his chief lieutenant, towards Makhsusabād (Murshidabad) apparently with the object of taking posses-

<sup>1</sup> Campos, *op. cit.*, p.141.

<sup>2</sup> Manrique, Vol. II., 403-404, 407. See also below.

<sup>3</sup> E. Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*, London, 1932, pp.100-101.

sion of some crown-lands there; while another contingent under 'Ināyat Allah, the viceroy's son, was sent towards Burdwan under the avowed object of chastising the zamindar of Hijli. At the same time the fleet of over six hundred war-boats under Khwāja Sher and Ma'sūm Khān (son of Mūsā Khān and grandson of 'Īsā Khān) was ordered to proceed from Dacca (Śrīpur) towards Hugli. By the middle of June 1632 the fleet reached the Hugli river and took position at Sankrail, some ten miles below modern Calcutta. The two contingents of the army then moved southwards from Burdwan and Murshidabad, joined their forces a little before Hugli and then joined the fleet at Sankrail. The river channel was closed by making a bridge of boats across the narrowest point of the river, and trenches were dug and batteries raised on both banks for several miles. Thus completing the preparations the Mughal forces appeared before Hugli on 20 June and commenced hostilities on the 22nd by capturing its suburbs. Realizing the superiority of the Mughal forces and being apparently surprised by their sudden appearance the Portuguese authorities now opened negotiations for a peaceful settlement. As already mentioned, Cabral led the Portuguese negotiating team. He has recorded the various stages in these peace talks. Briefly, the Mughals complained of the Portuguese help of men and arms to the Arakanese for their raids on Bengal, of the forcible capture and confinement of innocent people in Hugli for the purpose of making slaves or Christians of them, and otherwise of the nefarious slave trade by the Portuguese. Incidentally these negotiations reveal the real motives and reasons behind the Mughal siege of Hugli. The Portuguese sought to appease the Mughals by surrendering some 90 "Christian slaves", (that is, persons dragged into slavery and then forcibly converted to Christianity), and by making a payment of about 100,000 rupees, and also by surrendering, at one stage of the negotiations, four vessels. The negotiations broke down, however, mainly because of the Portuguese refusal to make complete submission and allow Mughal officers to search the Portuguese houses at Hugli to see if any slaves were concealed therein. Cabral says that the Mughals conducted the negotiations mainly to gain time for their guns and

other reinforcements to arrive from Dacca;<sup>1</sup> but the Portuguese appear to have been equally eager to gain time for getting aid from their fellow countrymen in Arakan and from Goa.<sup>2</sup> No such help was forthcoming, however, because the Goa authorities were at that moment without sufficient ships and funds to undertake an expedition to Bengal, while the Portuguese settlers in Arakan were then involved in an armed conflict with the Arakanese ruler. It would seem that Qāsim Khān had selected an opportune moment for capturing Hugli.

The siege of Hugli continued for about three months with intervals of peace negotiations and fightings. According to the Mughal sources, there were nearly seven thousand Portuguese masketeers in their stronghold at Hugli,<sup>3</sup> besides their allies and helpers consisting of Christians and slaves who lived in the outskirts of the city. It was these people who manned the Portuguese war-boats, brought supplies for the Portuguese and worked as labour for digging their trenches, etc. The Mughal general cut this source of support for the Portuguese by capturing the places of these Christians, particularly Bali, to the north of Hugli, and by making captives of the families of about 4,000 sailors and boatmen. This action forced these men to abandon the Portuguese cause and to go over to the Mughal side. Early in August 1632 the Mughal guns from Dacca and other places arrived. About the same time a Portuguese freebooter named Martim Affonso de Mello who had a personal quarrel with the Portuguese at Hugli, joined the Mughals and actively helped them in their siege operations. The Portuguese position became increasingly untenable and ultimately on 24 September they evacuated the city, embarked on their boats and attempted to escape down the river. The flight proved disastrous, as most of their boats were sunk and a large number of them were killed by firings from the Mughal shore batteries. The survivors, numbering about 3,000 including slaves and local Christians managed to reach the Saugor island at the mouth of the river. According to the

<sup>1</sup> *Manrique*, Vol. II, p. 407.

<sup>2</sup> See *A.S.* Vol. I., p. 500.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 499-500; *B.N.*, Vol. I., p. 437.

Mughal sources about one thousand of their soldiers were lost during the siege, while "ten thousand of the enemy—men, women, old and young, were slain, drowned or burnt", and about 4,400 persons were taken captives.<sup>1</sup> Of the latter some four hundred were produced before the emperor in the following year and were offered the alternative of imprisonment or conversion to Islam. Some of them agreed to conversion, we are told, but the others preferred to remain in prison.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Portuguese den of slave trade and forcible proselytizing activities at Hugli was suppressed. This did not mean, however, their total expulsion from the land or the stoppage of their regular trading activities. In fact they were soon afterwards allowed to come back to Hugli for peaceful trading and preaching; but they could no longer make it a base for irregular dealings. The capture of Hugli also deprived the Arakanese ruler and the Arakan-based Portuguese pirates of an important source of support. The Mughals could now deal with these latter without the fear of being harassed at the rear from the Hugli side. In fact the capture of Hugli proved to be a necessary step towards the suppression of the "Feringi" and "Magh" pirates of Chittagong and the recapture of that place from the Arakanese which were achieved, as will be related shortly, during the succeeding reign of Aurangzeb.

II: THE VICEROYALTIES OF A'ZAM KHÂN (1042—1045/1632—1635)  
AND ISLÂM KHÂN MASHHADÎ (1045—1049/1635—1639):  
CONFLICTS WITH ASSAM AND ARAKAN

Shortly after the capture of Hugli Qāsim Khān II died. He was succeeded in the viceroyalty of Bengal by A'zam Khān. The latter was an inhabitant of Iraq and his original name was Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir. He arrived in India during the reign of Jahāngīr who, in recognition of his merits, first appointed him as Imperial *Khān-i-Sāman*, then as *ṣūbahdār* (governor) of Kashmir and finally as *mīr-i-bakhshī*. Shāh Jahān raised his rank and appointed him *Vizier* or the supreme *Dīwān* and conferred on him

<sup>1</sup> B.N. Vol. I., p.439; A.S., Vol. I., p.501.

<sup>2</sup> B.N. Vol. I., p.439.

the title of A'zam Khān. Previously he was awarded the title of Irādat Khān.<sup>1</sup> A'zam Khān's viceroyalty of three years (1042—1045/1632—1635) was uneventful. He is said to have collected in Bengal a "good set of men", many of whom were Persians.<sup>2</sup> In 1045/1635 he was replaced by Islām Khān Mashhadī because, according to the *Riyād*, the work of administration had fallen into disarray and the Assamese had been making incursions into the border *parganās*.<sup>3</sup>

Islām Khān Mashhadī's original name was Mīr 'Abd al-Salām. The title Islām Khān was conferred on him by Shāh Jahān. Before his appointment as viceroy in Bengal Islām Khān Mashhadī held various important posts including the governorship of Gujarat.<sup>4</sup> In Bengal his viceroyalty was noted for conflicts with Assam and Arakan.

#### (a) Conflict with Assam

"The Ahom war of Shah Jahan's reign was not the effect of imperialistic expansion. It was forced on the Mughals for the defence of their district of Kamrup against the ambitious policy of the Ahom king."<sup>5</sup> The Assamese ruler Susengpha alias Pratāp Singh (1603—1641) adopted a policy of expansion at the cost of the Mughal possession of Kāmṛūp during the early years of Shāh Jahān's reign. Susengpha was doubtless encouraged in this policy by the Mughal preoccupations with the Hugli Portuguese during Qāsim Khān II's vicereignty and also by the slackness of vigilance in the north-eastern frontier during A'zam Khān's vicereignty. The Assamese ruler set up Bali Nārāyan, brother of Parikshit Nārāyan of Kāmṛūp who had earlier submitted to the Mughals, as a subordinate ruler at Darrang and encouraged him to harass the Mughal authorities by making incursions into Kāmṛūp. Susengpha also gave shelter to revenue defaulters in Kāmṛūp, such as Santosh Laskar and Jairām, who fled to Assam.<sup>6</sup> The immediate

<sup>1</sup> *M.U.*, Vol. I., (tr.), pp.315-319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.318.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād*, p.211.

<sup>4</sup> *M.U.*, Vol. I., (tr.), pp.694-696.

<sup>5</sup> J.N. Sarkar in *H.B.*, II., p.328.

<sup>6</sup> *B.N.*, Vol. II., p.71.

cause of the conflict was, however, the treachery of Rājā Satrajit, who was appointed as a *thānadār* in Kāmrūp. He secretly encouraged Bali Nārāyan to make a surprise attack on Hājo, the Mughal headquarters in Kāmrūp. Accordingly in 1047/1637 Bali Nārāyan collected a large army of Assamese and Kochis and attacked Hājo.<sup>1</sup> The Mughal *fauzdār* of the place, 'Abd al-Salām, was not apparently prepared for this sudden attack and he appealed to the viceroy for reinforcements. Islām Khān sent a band of chosen *mansabdārs* (officers) like Shaikh Muḥīy-al-Dīn (a brother of 'Abd al-Salām's), Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambūh, Mirzā Muḥammad Bukhārī and Zain al-'Ābedīn, with sufficient troops and war-boats to meet the Assamese attack.<sup>2</sup> By the time these reinforcements reached Hājo, however, the Assamese had diverted their main pressure on Pandu, the very place which was in charge of Satrajit. The latter withdrew from the place without offering any resistance, thus collusively allowing the place to fall into the Assamese hands. Under this situation 'Abd al-Salām stayed at Hājo with the main body of the reinforcements and sent a detachment under Zain al-'Ābedīn and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambūh to attack the Assamese in the Pandu region. Zain al-'Ābedīn and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambūh inflicted a defeat upon the Assamese and pushed them back to their frontier stronghold at Śrīghāt.

At this stage 'Abd al-Salām appears to have made a tactical blunder. He asked Zain al-'Ābedīn to return to Hājo, leaving the army and the navy at Śrīghāt in charge of Ṣāliḥ Kambūh, Raja Satrajit and Majis Bāyazīd. As soon as Zain al-'Ābedīn left Śrīghāt the Assamese resumed the offensive and defeated the Mughal forces there, killing Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambūh in the fight and carrying away Majlis Bāyazīd as prisoners.<sup>3</sup> The disaster was due mainly to the treacherous conduct of Satrajit who now openly joined the Assamese taking with him several vessels full of provisions and munitions.<sup>4</sup> After this success Bali Nārāyan next

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.76.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

advanced with his Assamese and Koch troops towards Hājo and besieged it. The Mughals found it impossible to resist the Assamese. Zain al-‘Ābedīn fell fighting. ‘Abd al-Salām and his brother Shaikh Muḥīy-al-Dīn went to the Assamese camp for negotiating the terms of capitulation but were treacherously captured and sent as captives to the Ahom court.<sup>1</sup> Hājo now passed under the control of Bali Nārāyan. Soon, however, fresh reinforcements were rushed from Dacca under the viceroy's brother Mīr Zain al-Dīn ‘Alī, assisted by Allahyār Khān, Muḥammad Zamān Tehrānī and other *mansabdārs*. A strong fleet of war-boats under Ma‘ṣūm Khān was also sent in support of the army. These forces advanced along the Brahmaputra and first recovered Karibāri, on the north bank of the river, by defeating Chandranārāyan, an insurgent brother of Parikshit Nārāyan, who fled into Assam.<sup>2</sup> The Mughals next recovered the *Dakhinkul* or the territory lying on the south bank of the river, and then marched upon Dhubri where they captured Satrajit. The traitor was sent to Dacca where he was executed.<sup>3</sup> The Assamese next took their stand at Jogigophā, near Goalpara where also they were defeated with heavy loss and were forced to retire beyond the Banas river.<sup>4</sup> At this stage Chandranārāyan died of smallpox. His death, together with the execution of Satrajit, seriously weakened the Assamese position. Nevertheless Bali Nārāyan, assisted by 20,000 Assamese soldiers under the command of Susengpha's son-in-law, made his last stand against the Mughals near the Kālāpām river where he was decisively defeated on 31 October 1637. About 4,000 Assamese soldiers and a number of their chiefs including the Assamese king's son-in-law fell in the battle. Bali Nārāyan withdrew towards Darrang, while a portion of his army fell back on Śrīghāt and Pāndu. The Mughals, however, followed up their success by a quick pursuit of the enemy and succeeded in driving out the Assamese from Śrīghāt and Pāndu in December, 1637. Nearly 500 Assamese war-boats and 300 guns fell into the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

Mughal hands.<sup>1</sup> With the capture of Pāndu Koch was cleared of the Assamese. The Mughal forces next advanced into Darrang to hunt down Bali Nārāyan. The latter fled into Assam where he led a fugitive's life in great distress till his death. Darrang was annexed by the Mughals.

With Bali Nārāyan's flight into Assam and the annexation of Darrang by the Mughals the second Ahom-Mughal war practically came to an end. The hostilities were formally ended by a negotiated settlement during 1638-39 which fixed the Barnadī in the north and the Ashur-ali in the south as the boundary of the Mughal dominions in the north-east. Gauhati was now selected as the Mughal headquarters there. For the rest of Shāh Jahān's reign there was no further conflict with Assam although occasional trade and frontier problems strained relations between the two from time to time.

#### (b) *Trouble with Arakan*

Towards the close of the conflict with Assam things took an abrupt turn in the south-east which threatend the outbreak of hostilities with Arakan. In 1638 the Arakanese ruler Thiri Thudhamma died and his throne was usurped by a servant who was a lover of the dowager queen and who now assumed the title of Narapati. Thereupon the late king's brother and viceroy at Chittagong, Mātak Rāi, declared independence and attempted to oust the usurper. Mātak Rāi failed in his attempt, however, because of lack of adequate naval power and was forced in consequence to seek asylum with the Mughal *thānādār* of Bhulua (Noakhali). Islām Khān Mashhādī ordered the *thānādārs* of Bhulua and Jagdia to render assistance to the fugitive Arakanese prince. As the latter proceeded towards Bhulua an Arakanese fleet of about 200 war-boats (*jālias*) pursued him upto the Feni river and attempted to prevent his crossing the river. The forces of the Mughal *thānādārs* drove back the Arakanese fleet by incessant gunfires and Mātak Rāi was enabled to cross the Feni river safely and to reach Jahāngīrnagar with his family and nearly 9000 of his

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.



Arakanese followers.<sup>1</sup> Islām Khān made suitable provisions for the stay of the prince and other fugitives at Dacca.<sup>2</sup>

Narapati did not, however, give up the attempt to get hold of Mātak Rāi and fitted out a full-scale naval expedition against Bengal with more than 650 vessels of different types. Islām Khān met the threat by promptly advancing from Dacca and by mobilising his army and navy near the mouth of the river Meghna. Although the Arakanese fleet had entered the estuary of the river, it did not dare advance further and quickly withdrew.<sup>3</sup>

The Arakanese domestic quarrel and its sequel had some important consequences for Bengal. The Portuguese settlers at Chittagong had sided with Mātak Rāi. Hence out of fear of Narapati's vengeance they left the place and migrated to the other Portuguese possessions in the subcontinent. Some of them even took asylum with the Mughals in Bengal. As a result about twelve thousand people of Bengal who had been forcibly held in slavery by the "Feringis" there now escaped and returned home.<sup>4</sup> The dispersal of the Portuguese from Chittagong also proved beneficial in two other ways. They lost, at least temporarily, their hitherto safe base for piratical operations in lower Bengal. Hence there was an appreciable abatement of their depredations during the succeeding viceroyalty of prince shujā'. Secondly, it weakened the striking power of the Arakanese ruler also, for the support of the "Feringi" naval arm was no longer available to him. And although some of the "Feringis" subsequently returned to Chittagong, the "Magh-Feringi" partnership never regained its former intimacy. The breach thus created between the two was advantageously made use of by Shāista Khān, Aurangzeb's viceroy in Bengal, who won over the "Feringis" of Chittagong and conquered that place from the Arakanese some twenty-eight years afterwards. In all these respects, thus, the Mātak Rāi incident proved complementary to the capture of Hugli in 1632.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

### III: PRINCE MUHAMMAD SHUJĀ' AS VICEROY IN BENGAL (1049—1070/1639—1660)

Shortly after the conclusion of the Assam war and the Mātak Rāi incident Islām Khān Mashhadī was recalled to court to assume the office of Prime Minister (*Wazīr-i-Dīwān-i-'Alā*), and prince Muḥammad Shujā', Shāh Jahān's second son, was appointed viceroy in Bengal. As the prince was at the time away at Kabul, Saif Khān, governor of Bihar, was asked to administer Bengal on his behalf till his arrival there. Saif Khān was closely related to the emperor, having married Malikah Bānū, sister of empress Mumtāz Maḥal and a daughter of Āṣaf Khān. Saif Khān died in Bengal in 1049/1639 and his wife died there the following year.

Prince Shujā''s viceroyalty lasted for a long period of twenty-one years, from 1049 to 1070 (1639-1660), with two short intervals from March 1647 to March 1648 and from March to September 1652, during which time he had to leave Bengal to assist his father in his north-western campaigns. The appointment of a prince as viceroy in Bengal indicates that the emperor attached great importance to the good and effective administration of this frontier province. During Shujā''s viceroyalty Bengal witnessed a long period of peace and prosperity in all spheres of life.

On his arrival in Bengal Shujā' fixed his headquarters at Rajmahal, instead of Dacca, and appointed a deputy at the latter place. The measure appears to have been prompted by the prince's desire to live in the drier region near the Bihar frontier as well as by his intention to exercise effective control over all parts of the province which now included, besides the eastern districts, the territory of Kāmrūp in the north-east. Perhaps he also intended to be in closer contact with the imperial capital for, according to one view, he had his eyes upon the Delhi throne even from his early days of viceroyalty in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> At any rate his stay at Rajmahal enabled him to keep a closer eye on the foreign traders (the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English) who used to carry on their commercial activities mainly through the Hugli port and

<sup>1</sup> E.F.I., 1642-1645, pp.58-59.

along the course of the river running from Patna (in Bihar) through Rajmahal and Makhsusabad (Murshidabad). The new capital also proved especially advantageous as Orissa was added to his jurisdiction in 1052/1642. This territory had hitherto been under a separate governorship, but its administration had been far from satisfactory. Particularly its revenue administration had been mismanaged by Shāh Nawāz Khān, the former governor. To remedy this evil and also, presumably, to raise the status of the *ṣūbah* under the prince, Shāh Jahān added Orissa to Bengal. While doing so the emperor exhorted the prince as follows: "As you prefer to live at Rajmahal, you ought to make an official tour of your province by proceeding from Rajmahal to Burdwan and thence to Medinipur. This last named city is on the frontier of Orissa; you ought to call up there such of your officers from Orissa as you like and receive their accounts and reports about the country. From Medinipur you should go to Jahanabad [modern Arambag in Hugli] and thence to Satgaon-Hugli and Makhsusabad, and finally return to Rajmahal. This will enable you to learn the condition of the country and the people, while enjoying hunting and sight-seeing on the way."<sup>1</sup> The prince complied with these orders and also appointed a deputy governor over Orissa. These administrative rearrangements were accompanied by the introduction of suitable financial reforms throughout the *ṣūbah*. Towards the end of his viceroyalty Shujā' "prepared a new rent-roll of Bengal, which showed 34 Sarkārs and 1,350 mahals, and a total revenue on *khālsa* and *jāgīr* lands of Rs. 13,115,907 exclusive of *abwābs*."<sup>2</sup> In a letter written to the emperor in 1065/1655 Shujā' himself spoke about his administrative successes thus: "Since I have assumed charge of these tracts the manner in which I have laboured for the improvement of the country has been reported to you in despatches. I hope the *Ṣūbah* of Patna should also be given to me. The chiefs of Morang and Kachar [in Assam] who have not paid *peshkash* (tribute) to any predecessor of mine as governor of Bengal have all repeatedly professed obedience and goodwill and behave loyally. They have presented

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *H.B.*, II., p.334.

<sup>2</sup> See *Riyāṭ*, p.213, n.1.

several elephants which are being forwarded to the court.”<sup>1</sup> Shujā’ paid equal attention to agricultural improvement in the country. In the same communication he writes: “As promotion of cultivation and happiness of all people are known to be the particular objects of Your Majesty’s attention, I have, during this time, made much effort to improve cultivation and reclamation of the country that both the *subahs* are showing every day signs of such labour.”<sup>2</sup> He once again entreated his father to bestow on him the province of Bihar making the plea that his children were not keeping good health in Bengal and saying that if the said province was given him he would then leave his tender aged children in the more salutary climate of Patna and would devote himself to “the conduct of affairs in these *subahs*”.<sup>3</sup> Though self-eulogistic, the communication shows that Shujā’ had to send despatches to the emperor from time to time informing him about the progress of administration in the territories assigned to him (Shujā’). It also indicates that the prince exerted himself fully in the task of administration with a view to impressing his ability and worth upon his father and thus inducing him to add Bihar to the prince’s jurisdiction. And although Shujā’ raised the question of his children’s health as a reason for his wanting that territory, it would be reasonable to assume in the light of his subsequent role in the struggle for succession that he really intended to strengthen his position by obtaining Bihar. In any case, the view that Shujā’ had been negligent and inattentive to the task of administration<sup>4</sup> has to be taken with caution. It seems his subsequent failure in the struggle for succession and the confusion which that struggle had necessarily caused in the Bengal administration during the last two years of his viceroyalty have influenced judgements about his abilities and achievements as viceroy in Bengal.

Shujā’s viceroyalty witnessed a remarkable expansion of trade and commerce in the country. As already mentioned, the Portuguese were allowed to return to Hugli for peaceful trading

<sup>1</sup> Shujā’s letter (*Fayyād al-Qawānīn*) I.O.L. MSS. 3901), tr. in *IHRC*, 1928, pp. 139-40 and quoted in K.M. Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See for instance J.N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. I., Ch. 9.

activities. The Dutch and the English had also a flourishing trade during his period. The first English factory was established at Balasore on the Orissa coast in 1633. In 1650 (1050 H.) the English East India Company's agents obtained a *farmān* (Imperial Order) from Shāh Jahān which gave orders to "the various officials, including those having charge of the roads between Agra and Bengal and between Agra and Surat, either by way of Burhanpur or via Ahmadabad, that the English, having paid the usual customs at Surat, Broach or Lahri [Bandar], are not to be troubled with any further demands."<sup>1</sup> The obvious intention of this *farmān*, as the editor of the English factory records recognizes,<sup>2</sup> was to exempt the English from the payment of inland transit duties on goods sent down to the western coast for export "either by way of Burhanpur or via Ahmadabad". It did neither abolish the usual customs to be levied at Surat, Broach or other western ports, nor did it apply to Bengal where as yet the Company had no factory. The English agents in Bengal, however, misrepresented the purport of the *farmān* in both these particulars to Shujā' with a view to obtaining trade privileges in Bengal. The prince did not require the English agents to produce the original *farmān*, taking their word for it and in consonance with his policy of promoting trade and commerce in the country. Accordingly he granted them a *nishān* (permit) in 1061/1651 on receipt of 3,000 rupees. The *nishān* ran as follows :

It has been represented to His Highness that the goods of the English Company are by an imperial *farmān* exempt from duties, but that nevertheless the *mutasaddis* [customs officials] of Balasore and other ports of Orissa molest the merchants on that account, hindering them from buying and selling, and giving them trouble on the roads. His Highness orders that none of the officials shall demand any duties from them, either at the ports or on the roads, nor obstruct them in any other way."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, whereas the imperial *farmān* really required the English merchants to pay the "usual customs" at the western ports, Shujā's *nishān* of 1651, granted on a misrepresentation of the

<sup>1</sup> E.F.I., 1655-1660, pp.414-415.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.415.

purport of the former document, exempted them from the payment of any duty in Bengal. The English agents were aware of their dubious position, for, when the matter came up for consideration during a subsequent viceroyalty they admitted amongst themselves that "... the Prince's *nessaun* [*nishān*] ... was got by a strategem to mention the forgiving of custome according to the king's *phirmaund* [*fārmān*];" and that "...the so-called grants of privilege did not exist, the native officials being bribed by yearly presents to believe what the English affirm." <sup>1</sup> Shujā's *nishān*, however, gave a great impetus to the English trade in Bengal and the first English factory in the country was established at Hugli in that very year.

The development of trade and agriculture was possible mainly because of a fairly long period of peace enjoyed by Bengal under prince Shujā'. His viceroyalty was singularly free from any serious frontier war or internal trouble. Only two minor incidents of a military nature are on record. The one was the suppression of the Hijli zamindar Bahādur Khān's insubordination. He was a nephew and successor of the Afghan chief Salīm Khān who was reduced to submission by Islām Khān Chishtī.<sup>2</sup> Bahādur Khān had once rebelled during the time of Ibrāhīm Khān Fath Jang who forced him to submit and imposed upon him a "fine of Rs. 300,000 for his guilt and allowed him to retain his home and territory in accordance with the old rules."<sup>3</sup> He used to serve under the Mughal governor of Orissa and pay him tribute. When Orissa was assigned to Shujā', he made an enhancement of Bahādur Khān's tribute. The latter, according to the court historian, delayed payment. Hence in 1651 Shujā' sent his Orissa deputy with an army to conquer Hijli and to arrest the zamindar. "This was done and Bahādur was kept in prison."<sup>4</sup> The other incident was a successful naval fight against the Arakanese who had made a raid into the southern part of Barisal district. The Arakanese were defeated and forced to withdraw. To guard against further Arakanese raids Shujā' had a ring of forts erected at

<sup>1</sup> Hall to Bridges and Bridges to Hall, 12 May, 1669, *E.F.I.*, 1668-1669, pp.298, 299.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> *B.G.* II, pp.636-637.

<sup>4</sup> Waris, quoted in *H.B.*, II, p.333. See also *A.S.*, III, p.122.

Shujā'abād, about five miles south-west of modern Barisal town, Rupasia, near Jhalakati, and Indrapasa. The name Shujā'abād, as the editor of the *Barisal District Gazetteer* correctly supposes, is derived from Shujā'.<sup>1</sup> He also granted 77 acres of rent-free lands to the families of some Pathans (Afghan) who had fallen in the fight against the Arakanese.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV: WAR OF SUCCESSION AND THE END OF SHUJĀ'S CAREER

Towards the end of 1067/Sept. 1657 the emperor Shāh Jahān fell seriously ill. This acted as signal for a struggle for succession among his four sons, Dārā Shaikho, Shujā', Aurangzeb and Murād. Dārā, the eldest, was near the capital, being stationed at Agra, while the other three sons were away from their father, being in charge respectively of the provinces of Bengal, the Deccan and Gujarat. The princes and the nobles were already divided on personal as well as religious issues. Dārā was generally heterodox in his religious attitude and was naturally favoured by those like him and by most of the non-Muslim elements. In contrast Aurangzeb was noted for his steadfastness to Islām and was, as such, popular with the majority of the army and the nobility. Shujā', though a successful administrator in Bengal and Orissa, had lost much of his former vigour and also his hold over most of the nobles at court. At any rate he was far inferior to both Dārā and Aurangzeb in respect of military skill and personal qualities. Murād, the youngest, was at his best a mediocre and did not stand any comparison to his three elder brothers. In the event, therefore, the main contest for the throne was to be between Dārā and Aurangzeb.

The crisis was precipitated by Dārā's actions. As soon as his father fell ill he took the reins of government in his hands, and in order to keep the emperor completely under his control, forcibly removed him together with all royal treasures from Delhi to Agra in Šafar 1068 (November 1658). The removal of the emperor from public eye spread a rumour that he was really dead. Both

<sup>1</sup> Jack, *Baqarganj District Gazetteer*, p.16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

Shujā' and Murād proclaimed themselves kings in their respective provinces and began marching towards the capital with their forces. Aurangzeb was more cautious. He did not declare himself king; but he also proceeded with his troops towards the north avowedly with the object of seeing the emperor, but with full preparations to meet any opposition. Dārā, instead of trying to win over any of his brothers, attempted to fight and crush all of them. Accordingly he despatched a large army under the command of his son Sulaimān, assisted by Rājā Jai Singh, against Shujā'; and another well-equipped force under Rājā Jasawant Singh against Murād, with instructions to bar Aurangzeb's progress towards the north. Sulaimān defeated Shujā' by a surprise attack at Bahadurpur, near Benares, in February 1658 (21 Jamādī I 1068) and pursued him upto Monghyr in Bihar.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime Aurangzeb won over Murād to his side, effected a junction with his army, and routed Dārā's army under Jasawant Singh at Dharmat on 12 April 1658 (Rajab 1068).<sup>2</sup> When news of this reached Sulaimān, he abandoned the pursuit of Shujā', hastily concluded a peace with him on 7 May allowing him to retain Bengal, Orissa and Bihar, and marched towards Agra to help his father. Before Sulaimān's arrival, however, Dārā was completely defeated by Aurangzeb at Samugarh (Dholpur), eight miles east of Agra, on 29 May 1658 (7 Ramaḍān 1068) and was put to flight. He fled towards Agra, thence to the Panjab and other places. Aurangzeb triumphantly entered Agra where almost all the nobles, including the principal officers of Dārā and Murād, ranged themselves on Aurangzeb's side.<sup>3</sup> "It is a most surprising thing, however," writes Tavernier who did not recognize the religious issue involved in the war of succession, "that not one of the servants of this great emperor [Shāh Jahān] offered to assist him; [Dārā]; that all his subjects abandoned him, and that they turned their eyes to the rising sun, recognising no one as Emperor but Aurangzeb..."<sup>4</sup> After having occupied Agra and put Dārā to flight, Aurangzeb continued the latter's measure of keeping his

<sup>1</sup> A.N., p.31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.43, 55-56, 67-74.

<sup>3</sup> See Tavernier, I, pp.266, 272, 274.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.274.



father confined in the Agra fort, and also got hold of the person of Murād, suspecting disloyalty in him, and kept him imprisoned at the Gwalior fort.

Thus having become master of the situation Aurangzeb sought to conciliate Shujā' and wrote to him on 25 June 1658 as follows: "As you had often before begged the emperor Shāh Jahān for the province of Bihar, I now add it to your viceroyalty. Pass some time peacefully in administering it and repairing your broken power. When I return after disposing of the affair of Dārā, I shall try to gratify your other wishes. Like a true brother, I shall not refuse anything that you desire, be it land or money."<sup>1</sup> Shujā' was not however really interested in Bihar itself, and he made preparations for war thinking that Aurangzeb was too much preoccupied with the pursuit of Dārā. In October 1658 Shujā' set out for the capital with a large army and a flotilla of war-boats, and after occupying Rohtas, Chunar, Benares and Allahabad, advanced as far as Khajwa in modern Uttarpradesh (north India). There Aurangzeb inflicted a signal defeat on him and put him to flight towards Bengal on 5 January 1659 (1069).<sup>2</sup> Leaving Mua'zzam Khān alias Mīr Jumla with a strong detachment in charge of the pursuit of Shujā', Aurangzeb returned to the capital to attend to the affair of Dārā who was eventually captured and beheaded.

Pursued by Mīr Jumla Shujā' unsuccessfully attempted to make a stand at Monghyr and then fell back on Rajmahal. Mīr Jumla outflanked him by marching through the Jharkhand with the assistance of Khwāja Kamāl, the Afghan zamindar of Birbhum, and advancing along the Ganges pressed on Shujā' who was compelled to evacuate Rajmahal and withdraw to Tanda, four miles west of Gaud. Mīr Jumla occupied Rajmahal on 13 April 1659. There he collected some war-boats and also received fresh reinforcements from the Bihar governor Dā'ūd Khān who joined him shortly afterwards. During the rains Shujā' made attempts with some success to dislodge Mīr Jumla from Rajmahal. But the latter finally defeated the prince after the rains early in

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *H.B.*, II, p.337.

<sup>2</sup> *A.N.*, p.243.

1660 (1070). Shujā' fled from Tanda to Dacca, but was hotly pursued by Mīr Jumla.<sup>1</sup> Unable to offer further resistance Shujā' left Dacca and with his family and close associates sought asylum in the neighbouring kingdom of Arakan.<sup>2</sup> Mīr Jumla made his victorious entry into Dacca on 9 May 1660. "In effecting the subjugation of Bengale", writes Bernier, "that great man [Mīr Jumla] did not behave to Sultan Sujah with the cruelty and breach of faith practised by Gion Khan [Jin Khan], that infamous Patan, towards Dara, or by the Raja of Serenaguer towards Soliman-Chekouh [Sulaiman Shaikoh]. He obtained possession of the country like a skilful captain, and disdaining any unworthy stratagem to secure Shuja's person, contented himself with driving the discomfited Prince to the sea, and compelling him to leave the kingdom."<sup>3</sup>

Shujā's life ended, however, in a sad tragedy. The king of Arakan proved false to his promise of providing the prince with a ship for a journey to Makka, wanted to marry his daughter and grab his valuables and treasures, and even planned to betray and imprison him. In a desperate state Shujā' attempted to effect a coup with the help of the Muslim subjects of the Arakanese ruler. The plans were detected, however, and the luckless prince at last tried to escape towards Pegu, but was pursued and killed, and all the members of his family, including his daughter whom the Arakanese king had forcibly married, were cruelly massacred.<sup>4</sup> The circumstances of his flight and death caused some uncertainty and rumours to prevail for some time. The position is best summarised by Bernier as follows:

"I have heard three or four totally different accounts of the fate of the Prince from those even who were on the spot. Some assured me that he was found among the slain, though it was difficult to recognise his body; and I have seen a letter from a person at the head of the Factory which the Hollanders maintain in that region, mentioning the same thing. Great uncertainty prevails, however, upon the subject, which is the reason why we have had so many alarming rumours at Dehli. It was reported, at one time, that he was arrived at *Massipatam* [Masulipatam], and that the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.495-561.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.562.

<sup>3</sup> Bernier, p.169.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.109-115.

Kings of Golkonda and Visapour [Vijapur] engaged to support his cause with all their forces. It was confidently said, at another period, that he had passed within sight of *Sourate* [Surat], with two ships flying red colours, with which he had been presented either by the king of *Pegu* or of *Siam*. Again, we were told that the Prince was in *Persia*; that he had been seen in *Schiras* [Shiraz], and soon afterwards in Kandahar, ready to invade the kingdom of *Caboul*.... But in my opinion there never existed ground for any of these reports. I attach great importance to the letter from the Dutch gentleman, which states that the Prince was killed in his attempt to escape; and one of *Sultan Sujah's* eunuchs, with whom I travelled from *Bengale* to *Massipatam*, and his former commandant of artillery, now in the service of the king of *Golkonda*, both assured me that their master was dead, although they were reluctant to communicate any further information. The *French* merchants whom I saw at *Dehli*, and who came direct from *Ispahan*, had never heard a syllable of *Sultan Sujah's* being in *Persia*. It seems also that his sword and dagger were found soon after his defeat: and if he reached the woods, as some people pretend, it can be scarcely hoped that he escaped; as it is probable he must have fallen into the hands of robbers, or have become a prey to the tigers or elephants which very greatly infest the forests of that country."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.112-114.

CHAPTER XVIII  
THE VICEROYALTY OF MĪR JUMLA  
(1660—1663)

With Shujā's flight to Arakan the war of succession came to an end. Mīr Jumla could now turn his attention to the task of consolidating his authority in Bengal. "He was intelligent, enterprising, brave, and wealthy, at the head of a victorious army; beloved and feared by his soldiers, and in possession of the finest province in Hindoustan."<sup>1</sup> Hence, although he had on an earlier occasion declined the offer of Bengal's governorship, he now intended to stay there and begged the emperor to allow his family to join him there.<sup>2</sup> On Aurangzeb's part there were enough reasons to continue Mīr Jumla's assignment in Bengal. The services rendered by that great general deserved to be rewarded. There was also the need to establish Aurangzeb's authority firmly over all parts of the province. Its administration had necessarily fallen into some disarray during the war of succession. Fresh troubles had cropped up in the north-east where the ruler of Kuch Bihar threw up his allegiance to the Mughal authority and attempted to conquer Kāmrūp. The ruler of Assam also had broken the treaty concluded during Islām Khān Mashhadī's viceroyalty<sup>3</sup> and had launched an attack on Kāmrūp. In the south-east the zamindar of Hijli, Bahādur Khān, who had been kept confined, escaped from prison and once again rose in rebellion. These problems, in addition to the Magh (Arakan) menace and Shujā's asylum in Arakan called for the appointment of a really capable and faithful viceroy in Bengal; and none appeared to be better suited for the job than Mīr Jumla who "understood equally well both war and the affairs of state." Accordingly Aurangzeb increased Mīr Jumla's *mansab* (rank) to 7000, of which 5000 were to be *du-aspa seh-aspa* (two-horses three horses),<sup>4</sup> conferred on him the title of *Khān-i-Khānān*, "the

<sup>1</sup> Bernier, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 368.

<sup>4</sup> The rank of the Mughal officers was determined in terms of the number of troopers they were expected to command or provide, with further classification as to the number of horses for the troopers. This was the mode of classification which did not necessarily correspond to the actual =

highest rank that can be conferred by the King upon a favourite", bestowed on him the choicest *jāgīrs* in Bengal yielding a salary of one *kror* of *dāms*, besides valuable presents including 10 fast Arabian and Iraqi horses, a *khil'at*, a bejewelled sword and a number of elephants. The emperor also confirmed him in the government of Bengal and sent his wife, daughter and his son's children there. Mīr Jumla's son, Muhammad Amīr Khān, was also appointed the central *mīr-i-bakhshī* or the Pay-Master, "the second or third situation in the state", and kept at court.

The *farmān* of appointment reveals both Aurangzeb's confidence in Mīr Jumla and the tasks that the latter were expected to accomplish. He was asked to administer the province effectively and efficiently, to chastise the rebels, to reorganize the revenue administration on a sound basis, to secure the safety of traffic and trade, to regulate the collection of customs, to rebuild the *nawwāra* (navy) and suppress the Maghs, and to conquer the kingdoms of Kuch Bihar and Assam. Above all, Mīr Jumla was asked to ensure the safety of life and property and to administer even-handed justice in accordance with the *sharī'at*. The emperor wrote: "The hand of the strong over the weak, of the oppressor over the oppressed should be removed. And in all affairs you should not transgress the laws of the *sharī'at* and limits of world-adorning justice. Your whole attention should be devoted to the well being of all creatures of God and the peace of mind of foreign travellers and the inhabitants, and the safety of the boundaries. Act in such a way that all people can pursue their work of cultivation in an atmosphere of security from the persons whose profession is oppression".<sup>1</sup>

Mīr Jumla's appointment as viceroy in Bengal marked in fact the culmination of a successful career. Son of a Persian merchant-adventurer, his original name was Muhammad Sa'd. He migrated to India in search of fortune and entered the service of Sultān Qutb Shāh of Golkonda where, by dint of uncommon abilities, he gradually rose to the exalted post of *wazīr*. He made a vast fortune by diamond-mining and other trading activities in the

= number of troops or horses under the *mansabdār*.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The life of Mīr Jumla*, Calcutta, 1951, p.209.

Daccan and became the owner of twenty *maunds* of diamonds.<sup>1</sup> He conquered the Karnatak for the Sultān of Golkonda. Differences arose, however, between the latter and the Mīr who was then won over for the Mughals by Aurangzeb, Shāh Jahān's son and viceroy in the Deccan. For some time Mīr Jumla acted as governor of Khandesh. During the war of succession he greatly helped Aurangzeb as his general and confidential adviser. As the latter's viceroy in Bengal Mīr Jumla similarly justified the trust and confidence reposed in him.<sup>2</sup>

#### I: ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION

The war of succession and prince Shujā's flight to Arakan necessitated an administrative reorganization. To begin with Mīr Jumla retransferred the capital from Rajmahal to Dacca. This was necessary in order to keep in check the Arakanese and the Portuguese pirates, and also to frustrate any possible attempt by the fugitive prince Shujā to come back with the help of the former. With this dual end in view Mīr Jumla constructed a fort at Idrakpur (modern Munshiganj) on the Dhaleswari, another at Fatullah on the Buriganga, about five miles to the south of modern Dacca city, and a third on the other side of the river. He also strengthened the old forts at Khizirpur (Narayanganj), Sonākāndā and Hajiganj.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of easy communication he constructed a road from Dacca to Khizirpur via Fatullah, passing over the Pāglā bridge, which also was constructed by his orders.<sup>4</sup> At one stage he also sought the naval assistance of the Dutch and English merchants against Shujā,<sup>5</sup> but this was not ultimately necessary, for the prince, as noted above, met with a tragic end before long in Arakan.

Simultaneously with these measures Mīr Jumla devoted his attention to purging the administration of corrupt or unreliable officers. The most notable example in this process was the

<sup>1</sup> See Tavernier, I, 138n, 230, and II, 67 and Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of Mīr Jumla's life prior to his appointment as viceroy in Bengal see Jagadish N. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, Chaps. I-VI.

<sup>3</sup> See *A.S.I.R.* XIV, pp. 93-94 and Plate XXXI; and also *Dacca District Gazetteer*, pp. 30, 186 and 189.

<sup>4</sup> Tavernier, I, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1655-60, pp. 288n, 392-93.

removal from office of Mulla Muṣṭafa, the *qādī* of Dacca, and of the *mīr-i-ādī* or head of the judiciary, the former being suspected of bribe-taking, and the latter being considered as only a parasite. After their removal Mīr-Jumla himself assumed the charge of the administration of justice. He retained in service, however, those officers who were found sincere and loyal. In consonance with the emperor's directive Mīr Jumla overhauled the revenue administration. During the war of succession this branch of the administration was most mismanaged. Two evils needed his particular attention. He found that many *mansabdārs* held *jāgīrs* jointly over a number of *parganās* (revenue-divisions). This led to much confusion, wasteful collection of revenue and oppression upon the peasants. Secondly, there were many undeserving persons enjoying pensions and *madad-i-ma'āsh* lands (livelihood grants in lands). Mīr Jumla confirmed in their *jāgīrs* the virtuous *'aimadārs* and stipend-holders and others who had received *farmāns* from the emperor; but with regard to the others he cancelled, on the advice of Qādī Rizwī, the *ṣadr*, their pensions and *madad-i-ma'āsh* in the crown-lands and *jāgīrs*. Mīr Jumla also directed the *'aimadārs* to cultivate the lands assigned to them and to pay revenue to the state. Secondly, he directed his officers to collect revenue from the peasants with wisdom and moderation. Besides, the collection of the *zakāt* (1/40th of net savings for a complete year) from well-to-do Muslims, and of custom (*haṣīl*) from traders and artificers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, was regularised. He also dealt severely with the traders making unconscionable bargains or unnatural profits. Thus he compelled the grain merchants of Dacca to pay rupees 25,000 by way of a sort of excess profits-tax because they had made huge profits by taking undue advantage of the continued presence of large army-camps there on the eve of the Kuch Bihar expedition. Forewarned by the viceroy's stern attitude, the city bankers surrendered of their own accord a sum of three hundred thousand rupees.<sup>1</sup>

Mīr Jumla also administered Orissa on behalf of the emperor

<sup>1</sup> Batavia Dagb Register. Nov. 1661, quoted in Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p.292.

till the appointment of a governor over that territory. It had been joined to the Bengal administration, as noted before, during prince Shujā's viceroyalty. His defeat and ultimate flight created a vacuum in the administration of Orissa also. Mīr Jumla therefore took early steps to assert Aurangzeb's authority over there. Shortly after having established his hold over west Bengal Mīr Jumla deputed Ihtishām Khān towards the end of 1659 to assume charge of Orissa. One of its feudatory chiefs, Rājā Nīlkānta Dev, had withheld payment of the state-revenue by taking advantage of the war of succession. In accordance with Aurangzeb's directives, therefore, his estate was resumed. Similarly the *madad-i-ma'āsh* lands enjoyed by the recalcitrant Shaikh Abū-al-Khair of Qutbpur in *sarkār* Goalpara were also confiscated.<sup>1</sup> By the middle of 1660 Khān-i-Daurān was appointed governor of Orissa. Even after that Mīr Jumla continued to exercise general supervision over its administration, and its revenues continued to be forwarded to the Mughal court via Rajmahal along with those of Bengal.

Mīr Jumla's continued interest in Orissa affairs was due partly to the need for suppressing the rebellious zamindar of Hijli, Bahādur Khān, and partly to the need for regulating the commercial activities of the European companies who carried on their business mainly through the ports of Hugli and Balasore. Bahādur Khān had rebelled during prince Shujā's viceroyalty and had therefore been suppressed and kept in confinement. When the latter was preoccupied with the war of succession, however, Bahādur Khān escaped from prison and assumed independence in Hijli. The locality was within the jurisdiction of Orissa. For effectively dealing with Bahādur Khān's rebellion Mīr Jumla asked the emperor Aurangzeb to transfer Hijli to Bengal. This was done, and early in 1661 Mīr Jumla, with some naval assistance by the Dutch merchants in Bengal, suppressed Bahādur Khān and conquered Hijli. His brother, Kamāl Khān, was killed in battle while he himself, along with his eleven companions were taken to Dacca as prisoners on 6 May 1661.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *op.cit.*, pp.212-213.

<sup>2</sup> The Dutch Factor's Van Den Broeke's letter to Batavia, 10 October 1661, cited in *E.F.I.*, 1661-1664, p.70.



## III: RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COMPANIES

(a) *While in the Deccan*

Mīr Jumla's relationship with the European companies in Bengal, particularly the English East India Company, was essentially a continuation of his relationship with them in the Daccan. In Bengal this was to some extent modified by local conditions and other considerations. It is therefore necessary to refer briefly to Mīr Jumla's dealings with them prior to his coming to Bengal. Two general factors need to be emphasized in this connection. First, the first half of the 17th century of the Christian era witnessed a rapid decline of the Portuguese power and the emergence in its place of the Dutch and the English as the principal competitors in the domain of international trade and colonization. More often than not they carried their mutual rivalry to the courts of the Asian countries with whom they established trade contact. This necessarily influenced the attitude of any local authority, and for that matter of Mīr Jumla, towards them. Secondly Mīr Jumla, besides being a skilful general and administrator, was himself a great merchant. He held a key position in the Sultānat of Golkonda from 1635 successively as governor of Masulipatam, wazīr (minister) and conqueror-administrator of the Karanatak. During this period he acquired an immense fortune by extensive commercial activities including diamond mining. By 1650 he had 4000 horses, 300 elephants, about 500 camels and 10,000 oxen to transport his merchandize to various places in Golkonda, Bijapur and different parts of the Mughal empire. He had also established trade relations with Arakan, Pegu, Tennasserin, Acheen, Peruk, Macassar, the Maldives, Bengal, Ceylon, Persia and Arabia. For this external trade he had also built up a sizeable mercantile marine consisting of more than a dozen large vessels or junks.<sup>1</sup> In his dealings with the foreign merchants, therefore, he was naturally conscious of his own interests as much as those of the state. It goes much to his credit, however, that he succeeded in striking a happy balance

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1637-41, pp. 79-80; 1642-45, pp. 55, 80; 1651-54, p. 12.

between these two and never allowed his personal commercial interests to override the financial interests of the state.

In view of his position in the state the foreign merchants, particularly the Dutch and the English, were eager to placate him and at times offered him presents, lent him men to sail his ships and even carried his goods in their ships to different destinations without charging any freight. In his turn Mīr Jumla confirmed their trade privileges, lent them money for their timely investments and allowed them to use his ships and pilots. When they were found overstepping the privileges granted to them, however, Mīr Jumla took a strong attitude. On such occasions the foreign merchants accused him of oppression and greed. A close examination of their own records shows, however, that if at any time Mīr Jumla treated them sternly, they themselves were to blame for that. In extreme cases the conflict assumed the pattern usual for a land power on the one hand, and a sea power on the other. Mīr Jumla stopped their trade in the country and invested their factories, while they opened fire on coastal towns, prevented the Deccani ships from plying on the seas, and even captured Mīr Jumla's own vessels.

The first such conflict took place in 1637-38 A.C. By the "Golden Farmān" of 1634 the Golkonda ruler had granted an annual abatement of 800 *pagodas* of customs to the English East India Company, that is they were allowed to trade custom-free if the duties payable by them did not exceed that amount. Mīr Jumla found that the volume of trade carried on by them not only far exceeded that limit, they also engaged themselves in unlicensed trading. Hence he asked the officers at the port-town of Masulipatam to demand the excess customs from the English. A quarrel soon developed over the issue and the latter opened artillery fire on Masulipatam.<sup>1</sup> The English soon realized their mistake and hastened to improve their position by sending a mission headed by Henry Cogan to Golkonda.<sup>2</sup> At the same time they also founded the Fort St. George at Madras by obtaining permission to do so from the Rājā of Chandragiri, representative

<sup>1</sup> E.F.I., 1636, pp.78-79.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.143-144, 145.

of the Vijayanagar ruler at that place. The Cogan mission succeeded in repairing the breach and Mīr Jumla sent special instructions to the governor of Masulipatam to receive Cogan and to treat the English with respect.<sup>1</sup> A few years later, in 1641-42, another conflict developed on account of the action of the Danes who arbitrarily seized one of Mīr Jumla's junks on the seas. An embargo was thereupon placed on the trade of all the foreign merchants in Golkonda, including the Dutch and the English, by way of putting pressure on the Danes. The latter released the ship and the dispute was soon over.

The next important development in Mīr Jumla's relation with the foreign companies took place in connection with his conquest of the Karnatak. The English, seeing that the territory in which their new fortification at Madras was situated would pass from Vijayanagar to Golkonda, hastened to further placate Mīr Jumla. Thus when he camped near Madras in 1646 for the siege of San Thome, the English agent presented him with a brass gun, lent him a gunner and several soldiers, and assisted him in other ways.<sup>2</sup> Mīr Jumla amply reciprocated the friendly attitude and after the conquest of the territory confirmed the existing privileges of both the English and the Dutch (July 1647).<sup>3</sup> The Portuguese also received better treatment from him than from the Hindu ruler.<sup>4</sup> Things continued more or less in this state till 1650 when Mīr Jumla became displeased with the Dutch for their attempt to monopolize the "whole trade of India" and their interference with his trade with Queda and Acheen.<sup>5</sup> About the same time the relationship between the Dutch and the English fast deteriorated culminating in the first Anglo-Dutch war of the early fifties. The stage was thus set for both the English and Mīr Jumla to come closer to each other. He wanted to frustrate the monopolistic aims of the Dutch by trying to become himself a monopolist in cloth trade. He proposed to take from the English all the goods they brought from Europe in return for their taking

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.148, 162-64, 200.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1645-50, pp.XXVII-XXIX, 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.166-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p.238.

<sup>5</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1651-54, pp.XXV, 13.

all the cloth and other articles of the Karnatak from him. This led to the famous missions of Edward Lettleton accompanied by Ventaka Brahman to Mīr Jumla's court during 1650—52.<sup>1</sup> The negotiation did not, however, lead to any formal agreement. About the same time the Dutch also sent a mission to Mīr Jumla (1651—52) asking for permission to fortify their settlement at Pulicat, and for an enlargement of their trade privileges. Mīr Jumla renewed their existing privileges, but referred the question of enlargement of their privileges to the Sultān of Golkanda. Mīr Jumla also refused to allow them to fortify Pulicat, although he allowed the English to strengthen their defences of Fort St. George. Meanwhile the Anglo-Dutch war having broken out, the Dutch became further estranged from Mīr Jumla. By 1654 they refused to grant passes to Mīr Jumla's and Karnatak ships sailing to Ceylon, Acheen and other places, and even captured a ship of Mīr Jumla sailing to Macassar under Portuguese protection. It was only after Mīr Jumla's threat to attack Pulicat that the Dutch agreed to restore the ship and to grant sailing passes to the Karnatak ships.

Meanwhile the Golkonda ruler Sultān Qutb Shāh's attempt to curb the semi-independent position of Mīr Jumla in the Karnatak led the latter to rise in rebellion (1653—1655) and ultimately to join the Mughal service, receiving the Karnatak as a personal *jāgīr* from the Mughal emperor. This opened a new phase in his relationship with the foreign companies, especially with the English. His departure from the Deccan and the unlikelihood of his return there to exercise effective control over the Karnatak emboldened the English to overstep their privileges and to carry on their private trade in a far greater degree than before. Moreover, their experience in the war with the Dutch made them all the more eager to acquire a more solid foothold in the Deccan. As part of this policy they secretly encouraged and abetted the Hindu revolt in the Karnatak headed by the Rājā of Chandagiri.<sup>2</sup> Conversely the Dutch, apprehensive of an increase in the power and influence of the English in the Deccan through a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24, 232-33, 261-62.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1655-1660, pp. 92-94, 288.

successful Hindu revolt, now leaned more favourably towards Mīr Jumla and became ready to support him in case of a Hindu attack on Pulicat. The strained relationship between the English and the Mīr found expression through accusations of oppression and harassment on the one hand,<sup>1</sup> and allegations of violations of trade privileges and hostility on the other. The quarrel was carried to a climax in August 1656 when the English seized Mīr Jumla's Red Sea (Mocha) junk together with its cargoes and four pieces of ordnance. This action of the English led to retaliatory investment of the Fort St. George at Madras by Mīr Jumla's forces. Ultimately negotiations were opened and an agreement was reached between Mīr Jumla's representative and the English agent Greenhill in April 1658. According to the agreement Mīr Jumla gave up his "interest" in the revenues and customs of Madras in lieu of an annual rent of 380 pagodas. Further negotiations led to the surrender of the junk to Mīr Jumla's Masulipatam agent, but it was soon recaptured by the English.<sup>2</sup>

(b) *His relations with the foreign marchants in Bengal*

Early in 1659 Mīr Jumla came to Bihar to help Aurangzeb in the war of succession and was subsequently deputed, as noted above, to pursue prince Shujā' in Bengal. Thus when he came to Bengal the dispute with the English over the junk affair had remained unsettled, whereas the Dutch were more or less in the position of an ally. His dealings with them in the new province naturally reflected these facts. The position of the English was also complicated by the very dubious trading privileges which they had obtained from prince Shujā' by misrepresenting the purport of emperor Shāh Jahān's *fārmān* of 1650.<sup>3</sup>

While passing through Bihar Mīr Jumla refused to allow the English to trade at Patna and to transport their goods unless compensation was paid for his ship and goods seized on the Madras coast. The English factor at Patna, Chamberlain, met him a couple of times in February 1659 and undertook to have the ship

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41-42, 93

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.263, 264-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, pp.373-374

returned or compensation paid within four and a half months. Chamberlain sent urgent appeals in this respect to the Madras authorities and also produced influential friends at Patna to intercede on his behalf. Upon this Mīr Jumla raised the embargo and allowed the English to trade at Patna.<sup>1</sup> The Madras authorities were, however, in no haste to settle the matter. They followed a policy of wait and see till the conclusion of Mīr Jumla's campaigns against prince Shujā'. They even appear to have entertained a wish for the latter's success. For some time indeed Mīr Jumla's main preoccupation was with the latter. Thus on entering Bengal he sought and received some naval help of the Dutch in guarding the rivers against Shujā'. Ken, the chief of the English factory at Kasimbazar, met Mīr Jumla in May (1659) and offered him the customary presents. Mīr Jumla refused to accept them and reiterated his demand for the return of the ship and for payment of compensation within two months, once again threatening to stop their trade in case of non-compliance.<sup>2</sup> The time limit of two months set this time seems to be in consonance with the undertaking given by Chamberlain at Patna in February to settle the matter within four and a half months. In view of Mīr Jumla's strong attitude the English agent at Hugli, Halstead, met him towards the end of May with a letter of intercession from a local official. Thereupon Mīr Jumla agreed to allow them to carry on their trade provided both Halstead and Ken gave him a written undertaking to make good all his damages within a month.<sup>3</sup> Whether the undertaking was actually given is not known. "In any case", as the editor of the English factory records writes, "Mīr Jumla could have had little time or attention to bestow upon his European visitors, for he had received the startling news that on 8 June Sultān Muḥammad (Aurangzeb's son accompanying Mīr Jumla) had fled to Shāh Shujā's camp."<sup>4</sup>

From June to August 1659 Mīr Jumla had been very busy with the war with Shujā'. Taking advantage of this the English did not settle the junk affair. By the end of August the war took a

<sup>1</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1655-1660, pp. 280-282.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 286-87.

<sup>3</sup> Joint letter of Halstead and Ken to Madras, 8 June, 1659, *ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

definite turn in Mīr Jumla's favour. It was then that he summoned Ken from Kasimbazar to Murshidabad and asked him to wait there till the arrival of Trevisa, the newly appointed English agent (chief factor) in Bengal. The latter reached Balasore on 23 August, but did not proceed to Hugli, his headquarters, until November.<sup>1</sup> From Balasore Trevisa forwarded to Mīr Jumla a letter from his Masulipatam agent and another from the English authorities at Surat relative to the junk, but did not part with any money because he thought the issue of the war between Mīr Jumla and Shujā' was still uncertain.<sup>2</sup> Even the Madras authorities, believing in rumours about military disasters to Mīr Jumla, advised Trevisa to hold out a threat to him that the English "had power to vindicate themselves" if his actions harmed their interests. As the situation in Bengal was very much different from what the Madras authorities imagined, Trevisa did not of course hold out such a threat. Mīr Jumla, however, acted at last. He asked the Balasore governor to send up Trevisa to Hugli and to levy a 4% duty on all English exports, and also an anchorage duty on their ships. That Mīr Jumla did not stop the English trade or seize their goods, as he had earlier threatened to do, shows that he was inclined towards moderation and settlement through negotiations. The demand for 4% customs was nothing extraordinary; for that was more or less the usual rate levied from other merchants, including the Dutch, throughout the Mughal empire. Moreover, Mīr Jumla was not expected to know about Shāh Shujā's grant to the English, which too was at any rate defective. The latter also do not appear to have pleaded it with Mīr Jumla prior to his demands, nor could they have conceivably done so as Mīr Jumla was at war with that prince. The demand for an anchorage charge appears to be new, made obviously for putting pressure for settling the junk affair.

Neither the customs nor the anchorage charge were, however, realized or paid for the year 1659, for the various vessels which were sent on from the Madras coast to Bengal had in the meantime been laden and dispatched.<sup>3</sup> The nature and amount of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.275.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.292-93.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.275.

goods carried by those ships appear from the company's instructions for that year asking their agents to invest £ 5,000 at Patna and £ 4,000 at Kasimbazar for procuring "8,000—10,000 pieces of long taffetas [cloth], 5,000 pieces of narrow, 800 tons of saltpetre (at about 6 £. per ton), 700 tons of sugar, 100 bales of silk (at 90—100 rupees per maund), 400 bales of cotton yarn (in short skeins and not cross-reeled), 30 tons of turmeric, 1,000 pieces of 'adatay sannoes' [cloth], 2,000 of 'sannoos of Harrapure', and as much cinnamon as could be procured."<sup>1</sup> Of these articles, only saltpetre was to be obtained from Patna, and the other articles from different places in Bengal.

Mīr Jumla's demands, however, created some hardships for the English factors. The local merchants and *bania*s hesitated to deal with and lend money to them for fear that the English goods might be seized by Mīr Jumla. This situation led Trevisa to write urgent letters to his superiors at Madras and Surat, speaking of the "extraordinary troubles" and urging them to make a settlement of the "unhappy and troublesome" junk affair if they were to desire the fullest benefit from Bengal trade, "the risingest trade in India".<sup>2</sup> These communications made the Madras and Surat authorities somewhat earnest in settling the junk affair and in petitioning Aurangzeb for trade privileges.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime Trevisa along with Ken met Mīr Jumla in December 1659 and concluded an agreement with him. According to this agreement, (a) Mīr Jumla's junk, and "all things else" taken by the Agent and others at Madras were to be returned to him (Mīr Jumla), and that (b) the whole matter was to be settled within four months by Mīr Jumla's agent at Masulipatam "Taptap" [Ṭabāṭabā'i], and "Mr. Wm. a Court and Mr. Wm. Jersip [Jearsay]" nominated by Trevisa.<sup>4</sup> Following this agreement Mīr Jumla issued a *parwāna* (order) on 7 Jamādī II 1070 (9 Feb. 1660) allowing the English to carry on their trade according to the privileges granted them by emperor Shāh Jahān and prince Shujā'.<sup>5</sup> This shows that Mīr

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276. The Dutch trade was far larger in volume.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294-297.

<sup>3</sup> See Surat letter to Madras, 25 Feb. 1660, and Madras letter to Bengal, 24 Feb. 1660, *ibid.*, pp. 289-390.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 390-391.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 391, 416.



Jumla was quite reasonable in his dealings. "I thought (I) should have got noe liberty till he had received satisfaction of all his demands" wrote Trevisa. "But (thanks be to God) it proved otherwise. So (I) have got his 'dustick,'<sup>1</sup> in which he confirmed the former privileges we enjoyed, which were granted to us by the old King and the Prince..."<sup>2</sup>

The English authorities at Madras did not show, however, an equal amount of reasonableness and insisted on restoring the vessel *only*, as it then was, "well repaired and made fashionable," and demanded the waiver of all other claims regarding goods and compensation exceeding 50,000 *pagōdas*. Consequently the matter was not settled within the four months stipulated by the above mentioned agreement. Differences of opinion also developed over the existing privileges of the English, particularly the nature of prince Shujā's grant.

Obtained by a misrepresentation, it was defective in respect of both its basis and terms<sup>3</sup> and, as it will be seen presently, even the English themselves had no clear idea of what it exactly secured for them. Mīr Jumla appears to have interpreted that it required the English to make an annual payment of 3,000 rupees in lieu of regular customs. And as the junk affair was not settled, he seems to have revived the claim for anchorage. By the end of June 1660 the Madras authorities contemplated the use of force and advised the Bengal factor that if Mīr Jumla would not be satisfied with the return of the ship only, they should be ready to leave the country so that "we may proceed against the Moores in another language ... And should they seize on all the Companies estate with you, yet due you all endeavour to leave the country, though you loose all the estate; for wee shall soone recover it."<sup>4</sup> A week later, on 28 June, the Madras authorities reiterated their intention of "using force" and asked Trevisa to furnish them "with what just aggrievances you lie under, what abuses have been offered." He was further asked to "state the business of the custommes so

<sup>1</sup> *Dastakh*, properly *parwānah*.

<sup>2</sup> Trevisa's letter to Bantam factors, 24 Feb. 1660, *ibid.*, p.391.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, pp.372-374.

<sup>4</sup> Madras letter to Trevisa, 21 June, 1660, *E.F.I.*, 1655-1660, pp.391-392.

fully that wee may understand it; for example, whether by grant from the former King you were to pay none, or whether'tis only the courtesie of the Governour, and for how long time you have not paid it, etc. As for the anchorage of our shipping, wee will not allow of the payment of any....."<sup>1</sup> This communication shows: (i) that the Madras authorities, while expressing their intention to use force against Mīr Jumla, were not even aware of the exact wrongs he was supposed to have done to the English trade in Bengal; and secondly, that they (the Madras authorities) did not also have any clear idea of what was secured for them by Shāh Shujā's grant. Their doubt about this matter is further reflected from their intention, announced in the same communication, to make representations to Aurangzeb's court for a grant of trading privileges.<sup>2</sup>

What explanation Trevisa gave about the question of exemption from customs is not known, but on 4 July he informed the 'President and Council' at Madras that Mīr Jumla, being dissatisfied with the Masulipatam negotiations about the junk, had stopped the English trade at Kasimbazar.<sup>3</sup> Evidently this was a partial embargo; for Trevisa did not mention about the trade at other places. The Madras authorities had already been thinking in terms of using force; and now on receipt of this letter they concluded that "if this Governor [Mīr Jumla] stays here, we are not to stay, and without doubt must break also." As negotiations were pending at Aurangzeb's court, "which might secure a favourable settlement," Trevisa was urged, however, to proceed cautiously: "Stop Mīr Jumla's mouth with a present ... as also promises of restoring his vessaile, and that without faile. You may also give him good words to cause a hope from him of the rest," Trevisa was advised.<sup>4</sup> The Madras authorities also sent a "large" number of ships to Bengal and added: "It may be, they [Mīr Jumla and his men] seeing shipping so large to arrive (and also, if possible, brought up the river), 'twill affright them into compliance ...." On the whole Trevisa was asked to act like a lion in

<sup>1</sup> Madras letter to Trevisa, 28 June 1660, *ibid.*, p.392.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Trevisa to Madras, 4 July 1660, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Madras letter to Trevisa, 29 August 1660, *ibid.*, pp.392-393.

the garb of a fox: "You must piscash [give a present], and piece the foxes skinn to the lyon."<sup>1</sup>

Once again, however, Mīr Jumla was found more reasonable than the Company's authorities in south India had imagined him to be. While threatening to stop their trade in Bengal he summoned Trevisa, the agent at Hugli, to meet him.<sup>2</sup> Trevisa did so and after discussing the question of their trade privilege was convinced of the justice of Mīr Jumla's view about it, that is, the need to pay an annual consolidated amount of rupees 3,000. This amount appears to have been paid immediately and the trade of the English in Bengal was allowed to continue as usual. On coming to know about this the Surat authorities wrote to Trevisa on 3 November 1660: "you doe very ill to continue the ill custome begunn by interloppers, of so greate presents to petty governors as 3,000 rupees as much as we give to the King."<sup>3</sup> Trevisa was, however, in a position to better understand the situation and wrote that the business of the English was likely to run well with the Nabah [Nawwāb] and that 1500 maunds of saltpetre were awaiting shipment in Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

The episode brings into relief two important facts. It shows that besides Trevisa, the Company's authorities in south India also came to realize that the annual payment of rupees 3,000 was called for by the "custom" previously begun, meaning obviously the arrangements made with prince Shujā'. Secondly, it shows that Mīr Jumla, though he persisted in his demand for the return of the junk and for compensation on account of its goods, he was in fact inclined to allow time for the settlement of the matter if only the English carried on their trade in Bengal in accordance with the laws of the land and were willing to pay the amount they had previously undertaken to do. In fact the junk affair was not settled during the life-time of Mīr Jumla. The vessel was severely damaged on account of a wreck in 1662 and the Madras authorities offered to give him another ship, apparently of a far inferior quality, intimating at the same time their unwillingness to pay any

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Surat letter to Trevisa, 3 Nov. 1660, *ibid.* p.394.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Madras letter to Surat, 11 Jan. 1660, *ibid.*

compensation for the goods seized and for the utilization of the junk.<sup>1</sup> The negotiations dragged on till Mīr Jumla's death early in 1663 when the Madras authorities were happy to inform their masters in England that the matter could now be conveniently consigned to the realm of oblivion.

One reason for Mīr Jumla's having implicitly allowed time for the settlement of the junk affair appears to be that by the end of 1660 he became busy in dealing with the rebellious zamindar Bahādur Khān of Hijli.<sup>2</sup> Another reason, perhaps, was that if the English continued regular trading activities in Bengal, he could also resume his personal business transactions with them, such as lending them money and sending some of his goods by their ships to Persia. In fact Trevisa, the Company's agent in Bengal, is henceforth found to have borrowed huge amounts from Mīr Jumla for private trade as well as for investment in the Company's business. The Madras authorities, though originally acquiescing in these latter transactions on Trevisa's part, subsequently tended to treat them as his personal liabilities.<sup>3</sup> In 1661 Trevisa audaciously seized one of Mīr Jumla's boats at Hugli as security for the recovery of some local merchant's debts to him. Mīr Jumla took a very stern attitude over this matter and threatened to expel the English from Bengal. Thereupon the Madras authorities asked Trevisa to restore the boat and apologize to Mīr Jumla, which was done. The same year the English in Bengal are also found to have entered into a competition with the Dutch, specially in procuring saltpetre at Patna. There Chamberlain, the English factor, induced Mirzā Luṭf Allah Beg, the *dīwān*, to monopolize the sale of saltpetre, on the understanding that all the saltpetre would be purchased by the English. Mirzā Luṭf Allah Beg is said to have therefore started "forcing the dealers to deliver their saltpetre to him, regardless of their contracts with the Dutch."<sup>4</sup> The Dutch Director at Hugli, Matheus Van den Broek, complained both to Mīr Jumla and to Trevisa. The latter disclaimed any knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1661-1664, pp.148-149.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra.*, p.384.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.68, 149.

<sup>4</sup> Dutch letter from Hugli, 29 Jan. 1661, *Batavia Dag Register*, 1661, p.75, quoted in *ibid.*, p.69.

the matter and agreed with the Dutch chief to have no dealing with the *dīwān*. Mīr Jumla also promptly dispatched a *parwāna* to Luṭf Allah Beg forbidding him to hinder the Dutch from trading freely in the commodity.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this settlement, however, Chamberlain continued secretly to buy saltpetre from Luṭf Allah.<sup>2</sup>

The Dutch trade in Bengal was by far larger than that of the English. The Dutch profits for the year 1660 were stated to "have been 155,744 *gulden* [golden *dīnārs*?]", and those for the following years were estimated at 204,200 "Gulden".<sup>3</sup> The Dutch also paid the usual customs without causing any trouble and were prompt in obtaining a new *farmān* from emperor Aurangzeb.<sup>4</sup> They were militarily more helpful to Mīr Jumla; yet he followed a policy of impartiality between them and the English in trade matters. It was only when he was away in his Assam expedition, and presumably in retaliation for Chamberlain's anti-Dutch activities at Patna, that the Dutch at Balasore induced the Balasore governor in 1662 to impede the passing of the goods brought by the English from Europe to Hugli. "It is the Dutches doeings," wrote the Madras factors, "for they are about settleinge a factorie their and have been varrie lardge in there piscashes [presents]".<sup>5</sup>

With the end of 1661 the story of Mīr Jumla's relation with the English, and as such with the other European companies in Bengal may properly be brought to an end; for at the beginning of November of that year he left Dacca on his Kuch Bihar and Assam expedition which kept him fully occupied, as will be seen presently, throughout 1662, and he died early in 1663 while yet on his way back to the capital. Nevertheless a few facts relating to the English trade in Bengal in 1662 throwing sidelights on the viceroy's policy may be noted. In that year William Blake was appointed the chief agent of the English Company in place of Trevisa doubtless because of his irregular and high-handed dealings. Blake was asked to carry "the value of 25,000 £, to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.69-70.

<sup>2</sup> Dutch letter from Hugli, 10 October, 1661, *ibid.*, pp.70-71.

<sup>3</sup> *Batavia Dagb Register*, 1661, pp.7 and 397, quoted in *ibid.*, p.71.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.185.

<sup>5</sup> Madras to Company, 10 January, 1663, *ibid.*, p.178.

Bay for the purchase of goods,"<sup>1</sup> and was also given authority to borrow 20,000 rials of eight "for investment in Bengal."<sup>2</sup> He was further instructed to obtain a *farmān* (grant) from the new government, taking "care that it be such a one as may in future free us from all taxes, tolls, customs or other impositions; for the gayning whereof wee would not have you to exceed 5 or 600 £. sterling."<sup>3</sup> At the end of the year the Madras authorities suggested to their masters in England the advisability of increased trade with Bengal, for "whither you doe little or much, the Governor of Hugly demandeth 3,000 rupees yearly to be paid him in money;...."<sup>4</sup> It was further stressed that for saltpetre "they must depend on Bengal". They also asked for orders for the ships to go up the river Hugli in order to save time and the cost of transport of goods by boats to Balasore.<sup>5</sup> All these communications indicate, on the one hand, a considerable increase in the English trade in Bengal during Mīr Jumla's time and, on the other, that the Madras authorities became eager by 1662 to obtain a new *farmān* because the previous grants did not in fact exempt them from the payment of customs. It is also clear that the English in Bengal paid annually as customs a fixed amount of 3,000 rupees, and that also most likely only for 1660, 1661 and 1662; for the ships for the year 1659, as noted above, had left Bengal with their goods before Mīr Jumla could turn his attention to the matter. There are occasional and vague references to "presents" to local officials and their "exactions", but nowhere any specific amount so paid is mentioned in the records. On the contrary, judging from the serious irregularities which existed in the accounts of the English factories in Bengal and the private trade of the company's agents there, it would seem that the allegation of exactions etc. were often made and perhaps shown in the accounts to cover up such irregularities. The accounts of the Hugli factory for 1658-59 and those of Kasimbazar and Patna for 1660-61 had not even been furnished to Madras till the end of 1662.<sup>6</sup> In the above mentioned

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165. See also Surat letter to Madras, 6 November 1662, *ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Madras letter to the Company at the end of 1662 it was specifically mentioned that the Bengal account "books were too imperfect to send home."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes what happened at the Bengal side were either twisted or misunderstood at Madras and so reported to England. For instance, the above mentioned incident of Chamberlain's efforts at Patna in 1661 to monopolize the purchase of saltpetre through the *dīwān* of that place at the cost of the Dutch were reported by the Madras authorities as an endeavour on Mīr Jumla's part to "ingrosse all commodities in Bengal."<sup>2</sup> Apart from the yearly amount of 3,000 rupees Mīr Jumla does not appear to have received from the English any undue gratis or money. As noted above, he had even refused to receive the customary present from the English in 1659 and 1660 because of the dispute over the junk episode. Whether he received any present in 1661 is not known, and he had been away in Kuch Bihar and Assam for the rest of his life. When he died early in 1663, it was the English who remained heavily indebted to him. His junk, which had been wrongfully seized and the liability to restore which was repeatedly acknowledged by them, was not restored before or after his death. Nor was compensation paid for the goods captured from the ship. And although at times the English thought that the freight payable on his goods which they occasionally carried on their ships (for gaining his favour) would go to offset the amount of compensation for the goods, no mention was even made of the utilization of his junk by the English. Even then, they admitted amongst themselves that according to the latest account compensation for Mīr Jumla's goods, besides the ship itself, "would entail an expenditure of over 7,000 £."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, when Trevisa was recalled from Bengal in 1662, during Mīr Jumla's absence in Assam, the former's borrowings from him amounted to 125,000

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.183.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67, compared with p.69, where the incident is elaborated with reference to Dutch records. The editor of the factory records (Foster) fails to notice the anomaly. Both Jadunath Sarkar and Jagdishnarayan Sarkar assert, apparently on the basis of this report of the Madras authorities that the "basis of Mīr Jumla's financial system in Bengal was monopoly. He endeavoured to become the sole stockist of all articles of necessity and then sell them at enhanced prices." (*H.B.II*, p.344, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p.216). There is no basis whatsoever for such a statement about Mīr Jumla.

<sup>3</sup> Madras Consultations, 27 August, 1662. *ibid.*, p.167.

rupees.<sup>1</sup> Part of this loan was afterwards repaid.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlain also left "many debts unpaid at Patna."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, two boxes of jewels sent to Mīr Jumla by his agent at Masulipatam through the English were also not delivered by the latter. Thus it was the English who took advantage of Mīr Jumla than he did of them. In spite of his personal business involvement, Mīr Jumla did not sacrifice the interests of the state and scrupulously followed a policy of impartiality between the English and the Dutch, the two contending companies in Bengal, preventing each from harming the other. When therefore Mīr Jumla died the English were genuinely aggrieved and apprehended troubles at the port-town of Balasore where, as noted above, the Dutch were instigating the local officials to impede the English trade there. "We expected a remedie hereto", wrote Blake and Bridges from Balasore sadly on 28 April, "if Caun Caun [*Khān-i-Khānan*, Mīr Jumla] had lived, who wee allwayes found friend to our nation, and shall have a sensible misse of, in these parts; but by his death (which the best information we have speakes to be the 1st current) we may at present expect rather an augmentation then diminution of obstructions in the Companies business in these parts."<sup>4</sup>

### III: KUCH BIHAR AND ASSAM EXPEDITIONS

#### (a) *Background and causes*

The last one year and a few months of Mīr Jumla's life were spent in his campaigns in Kuch Bihar, Kāmarūp and Assam. As in the case of Shāh Jahān's reign, these campaigns also were forced upon the Mughals and were more or less an off-shoot of the troubles arising out of the war of succession. Kuch Bihar had been submissive to the Mughal authority since 986 H./1578 A.C.<sup>5</sup> and had definitely accepted the position of a tributary state since 1005/end of 1596.<sup>6</sup> The kingdom once included Kāmrūp, but due

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.183.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1665-68, pp.135,145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1661-64, p.71.

<sup>4</sup> Blake and Bridges to Surat, 28 April, 1663, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Akbarnāma* (Lucknow edn.), Vol.III, p.207. At that time the Kuch Rājā is said to have sent valuable presents including fifty horses and four elephants to Akbar.

<sup>6</sup> *Ā'in*, tr. Blochmann, Vol.III, p.262. See also *supra*, p.285.



to a domestic problem the latter territory became separated from it since 989/1581 and a branch of the Kuch royal family came to rule over it. Kāmṛūp was at times in alliance with the Afghan chief Mūsā Khān and was the sanctuary of a number of Afghan fugitives. Hence in 1612 Jahāngīr's viceroy Islām Khān annexed it, partly with the assistance of the tributary Kuch ruler. During Shāh Jahān's reign, however, Mughal authority over Kāmṛūp suffered a temporary eclipse due to the treachery of the Mughal *thānāhdār* Rājā Satrajit and the aggressiveness of the Ahom ruler Susengpha, necessitating its re-subjugation, as noted in the last chapter, in 1047/1637-38, and the conclusion of a border treaty with the Assam ruler. The outbreak of the war of succession towards the end of Shāh Jahān's reign and the consequent withdrawal of the army from the frontier districts by Prince Shujā<sup>1</sup> in order to fight for the throne weakened the Mughal hold over that region. Taking advantage of that situation Rājā Bhīm Nārāyan (or Prān Nārāyan) of Kuch Bihar (r. 1633—1666) made raids into Ghorāghāt, and carried off a "great number of imperial subjects, men and women." He also sent his minister Bhavanāth with an army into Kāmṛūp where the tributary prince Durlabh Nārāyan was attacked and the zamindar of Baranagar in modern Goalpara was defeated and put to flight towards Assam. Bhavanāth also greatly oppressed the *ra'yats*. Mīr Lutf Allah Shīrāzī, the Mughal *faujdar* posted at Gauhati made some attempts to oppose the aggressive advance of the Kuch army but for lack of adequate army could not do much. At the same time the Assamese ruler Jaidhaj Singh violated the border treaty and sent a large army, "accompanied by a numerous fleet" into Kāmṛūp. Mīr Lutf Allah, seeing himself thus attacked from two sides, and having no troops to check the invaders, "took his ships, and withdrew to Dhākā".<sup>2</sup> The Kuch minister Bhavanāth then attempted to negotiate with the Assamese for partitioning and sharing Kāmṛūp between them, but was driven out of the territory by the latter. Thus by 1659 the whole of Kāmṛūp upto Karibāri passed into the possession of the Assamese ruler.

<sup>1</sup> *Fathiyah-i-'Ibriyah*, abstract translation by Blochmann in *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, p.63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

When therefore after Shujā's final defeat and flight to Arakan Mīr Jumla was appointed viceroy in Bengal, the emperor Aurangzeb specifically instructed him among other things to chastise the ruler of Kuch Bihār and to recover Kāmrūp (Assam).<sup>1</sup> The European traveller Bernier, however, attributes an unworthy motive on Aurangzeb's part, saying that he was afraid of his powerful viceroy and hence wanted to keep him busy in a foreign war. "Affairs had remained in this state nearly a twelve months," writes Bernier, "when the Mogul offered to Jemla [Mīr Jumla] the management of a war against the rich and powerful Raja of Acham [Assam] whose territories lie north of Dake [Dacca]... Aureng-Zebe justly apprehended that an ambitious soldier could not long remain in a state of repose, and that, if disengaged from foreign war, he would seek occasion to excite internal commotions." "The Emir himself" continues Bernier, "had been long meditating this enterprise, which he hoped would enable him to carry his arms to the confines of China, and secure to himself immortal fame."<sup>2</sup> The statement is purely ingenious. Bernier does not note the antecedents and is definitely mistaken in supposing that the initial orders for the Kāmrūp-Assam expedition were given a year after Mīr Jumla's assumption of office as viceroy. Nor is there any direct or indirect evidence which indicates that the emperor had grown jealous of him. Moreover, in the same breath, Bernier says that Mīr Jumla "had been long meditating this enterprise" in order to achieve fame, and that Aurangzeb cleverly engaged him against the powerful Rājā of Assam. That the emperor had no such motive is clear from the fact that he rather intended the viceroy first to recover the family and children of Prince Shujā', who was by then known to be dead, from Arakan. The imputation of inordinate ambition on Mīr Jumla's part is in conflict with an earlier statement of Bernier's, equally ingenious, that Mīr Jumla, being "enfeebled and broken down by age" wanted to pass the remainder of his days peacefully with his wife and children in Bengal.<sup>3</sup> It is also belied by the facts, which

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> *Bernier*, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

will be noted presently, that Mīr Jumla undertook the expedition only when he found that peaceful efforts and the attempts of his subordinate officials had failed to retrieve the Mughal position over the region. In fact the Kāmṛūp-Assam expedition was forced upon the viceroy by the circumstances. Even if Shujā' or any other prince had succeeded to the Mughal throne, and another person instead of Mīr Jumla had come to Bengal as viceroy, such a course of action would have followed for the sake of reasserting the Mughal authority on the north-east frontier and for rescuing the many Muslim men and women taken captives by the Kuch and the Assam rulers. Hence Shihāb-al-Dīn Talish, the contemporary historian, regards the campaign as a "holy war with the infidels of Assam" for the sake of "releasing Mussalmans" and "lifting up the banner of Islam."

For nearly two years the Assamese remained in possession of Kāmṛūp. When Prince Shujā' fled to Arakan and Mīr Jumla was firmly established at Jahāngīrnagar (Dacca) the Assamese rightly apprehended that the Mughals would now turn their attention to the affairs in Kāmṛūp. Accordingly the Assamese ruler Jaidhaj Singh sent an envoy to Mīr Jumla stating that he (Jaidhaj) had occupied Kāmṛūp "for no other reasons but to keep out the Kochis" and that he was now prepared to hand over the territory to any officer whom the viceroy might depute for the purpose.<sup>1</sup> Mīr Jumla was happy to see this turn in the events. He rewarded the envoy with a *khil'at* and sent Rashīd Khān, accompanied by Sayyid Nāṣir-al-Dīn Khān, Sayyid Salār Khān, Aghar Khān and others to take delivery of Kāmṛūp from the Assamese. About the same time the Kuch ruler Bhīm Nārāyan also sent an envoy asking for pardon; but Mīr Jumla, considering the Kuch ruler to be the prime cause of the trouble, imprisoned the envoy and sent Rājā Subhan (or Sujan) Singh Bundelah, assisted by Mirzā Beg with 1000 horse, to chastise the Kuch ruler and occupy Kuch Bihar.<sup>2</sup> The overtures of both the Assam and Kuch rulers proved however to be clever ruses on their part to gain time for making better military preparations. Rashīd Khan proceeded upto Kari-

<sup>1</sup> *F.I., op. cit.*, p.63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

bāri and took possession of Rangamati on the border of Kāmṛūp without any opposition. There he halted having come to know that the Assamese were making extensive preparations for war. Subhan Singh also could not advance beyond Ekduar, the entry point to Kuch Bihar. The king of Assam even sent an envoy with insolent letters to Rashīd Khān at Rangamati. The latter forwarded the envoy with the letters to Mīr Jumla who plainly told the envoy that if the Rājā of Assam would restore those lands which he had occupied and would send a *peshkash* (respectful presents), "and also the guns and other things which he had carried off from Kāmṛūp, and make a treaty and give his oath that he would in future desist" from aggressive activities, he would be left alone and no expedition would be launched against him. "Indeed", emphasizes the historian of the campaign, Shihāb-al-Dīn Tālīsh, "the Nawāb would have liked such an arrangement, and would have contented himself with the cession of Kāmṛūp and a moderate *peshkash*, as he wished, after the rains were over, to invade Arakan; for His Majesty [Aurangzeb] had ordered him to send the children and the wives of Prince Shujā' to court."<sup>1</sup> The Assam ruler did not send any reply to Mīr Jumla's overtures. Accordingly he sought the emperor's permission to postpone the Arakan expedition and to recapture Kuch Bihar and Kāmṛūp first.<sup>2</sup> The necessary imperial orders for this were received by the end of Muḥarram 1072 H (September 1661).<sup>3</sup>

#### (b) *Occupation of Kuch Bihar*

On the 18th Rabī' I 1072 (1st November 1661) Mīr Jumla started on his Kuch Bihar and Assam expedition, leaving Ihtishām Khān in charge of the capital and fort of Khizirpur, Mukhlīs Khān in charge of Akbarnagar (Rajmahal), and Bhagoti Dās and Khwājah Bhagwant Dās in charge of financial matters.

The forces accompanying Mīr Jumla included, besides elephants, 12,000 horse, 3000 foot together with a vast flotilla of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *F.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Dutch letter from Hugli, 10 October 1661, *Batavia Dag Register*, 1661, p. 387, quoted in *E.F.I.*, 1661-1664, p. 70. It is obviously this permission of the emperor which Bernier mentions as Aurangzeb's order to conquer Assam.

war-boats numbering at least 323.<sup>1</sup> Several Portuguese and Dutch sailors and a few Englishmen, not belonging to the company's staff, also accompanied the expedition.<sup>2</sup> Proceeding by way of Baritala Mīr Jumla reached the borders of Kām̄rūp near Ekduar on the last day of Rabī' II 1072 (12 Dec. 1661) when Subhan Singh, who had already been halting at Ekduar, joined him. The entry route at Ekduar was strongly fortified and was "surrounded by broad ditches and jungles." The other route leading to Kuch Bihar passed by Rangamati through Khuntaghat; but it was narrow and "intersected by many canals." Mīr Jumla therefore selected a third route along an *āl* or embankment passing through dense bamboo shrubs which, being considered impracticable for an army, had been left unguarded by the Kuch ruler. Leaving the fleet in the rivulet that connected Ghoraghat with the Brahmaputra Mīr Jumla advanced with his army through this route by cutting the bamboo shrubs. Finding it impossible to resist the Mughal army Rājā Bhīm Nārāyan fled towards Bhutan, while his minister fled to Murang. On the 7th Jamādī I 1072 (19 December 1661) Mīr Jumla entered the capital of Kuch Bihar and had the 'adhān raised from the palace of the Rājā by the *ṣadr*, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ.<sup>3</sup> The inhabitants of the town had fled in terror before the arrival of the army. Mīr Jumla strictly forbade plundering and meted out exemplary punishments to offending soldiers. A few soldiers, "having gone marauding and brought home a cow or a goat, or a few plantains, were marched through the camp and the town with an arrow stuck through their noses, and the stolen things suspended from their necks. This encouraged the inhabitants and they returned to their homes."<sup>4</sup> The Rājā's son, Bishn Nārāyan, fled from his father, waited on Mīr Jumla and embraced Islām.<sup>5</sup> "106 guns, 145 zamburaks, 11 ranchangis, 123 matchlocks, and much material and baggage were seized." After settling

<sup>1</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Tālish (op. cit., p. 73) mentions the different kinds of war boats as follows: 159 *Kosahs*, 48 *jalbahās*, 10 *ghrabs*, 7 *parindahs*, 1 *palil*, 1 *bahar*, 2 *balams*, 10 *khatgiris*, 5 *mahagiris* and 24 *palwarahs* and other ships. Unfortunately the historian does not furnish further particulars about the different types of vessels.

<sup>2</sup> E.F.I., 1661, p.70, n.3.

<sup>3</sup> F.I., op.cit., p.65.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.67.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Also A.N., p.688.

some preliminary affairs Mīr Jumla sent Isfandiyār Beg, son of the late Allahyār Khān, and others to Morang to capture Bhavanāth, the Rājā's Minister. The latter was captured and kept in confinement. A party was next sent to Kānthālbāri at the foot of the Bhutan hills to capture the Rājā, but as the latter had gone over to Bhutan, a Bhutia messenger was sent to the king of Bhutan, Dharmarājā, who was stated to be "over one hundred and twenty years old", requesting him to seize and send Bhim Nārāyan to Mīr Jumla or at least to drive him from the hills. Dharmarājā sent a reply excusing himself by saying that "he had not called Bhim Nārāyan; but as he had come unasked, he could not well drive a guest".<sup>1</sup> Mīr Jumla had no time to pursue the matter further. He annexed the territory and changed the name of the capital town from Kuch Bihar to 'Ālamgīrnagar. Isfandiyār Khān, son of the late Allahyār Khān, was to officiate as *faujdar* (governor) over the territory till the arrival of 'Askar Khān, who had been appointed to that office; and Qādī Sāmui Shujā'ī was appointed *dīwān*, and Mīr 'Abd Al-Razzāq and Khwājah Kishwar Dās Maṣabdar were made 'amīns. An army of 400 horse and 1000 matchlockmen were left with Isfandiyār Khān.<sup>2</sup>

### (c) Recovery of Kāmrūp

After staying for only sixteen days in Kuch Bihar Mīr Jumla started for Kāmrūp on 23 Jamādī I 1072 (4 January 1662). He advanced along Khuntaghat and Rangamati. At the later place he was joined by Rashīd Khān who had been halting there. The army had to proceed across jungles and numerous rivulets so that the daily progress "was not more than 2 or 2½ kos [about 5 miles]". On the approach of the Mughal army the Assamese forces withdrew further towards the interior. On 9 Jamādī II (20 January 1662) the expeditionary force reached and took possession of Fort Jogighopa, opposite Goalpara, near the meeting place of the Banas with the Brahmaputra river. "The enemies had fled without striking a blow". Leaving 'Atā' Allah as commander of Jogighopa Mīr Jumla resumed his march with the main body of the army

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

along the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra, while a smaller section crossed the river and proceeded along the southern bank, led by Nāṣir al-Dīn Khān, Yādgār Khān and other 'amīrs. The fleet advanced by the river. On 24 Jamādī II (4 Feb. 1662) Mīr Jumla reached the neighbourhood of Gauhati which was flanked at a distance of about 2 miles by two forts, fort Śrīghāt and Fort Pāndu, situated opposite each other respectively on the northern and southern banks of the river. Fort Śrīghāt was "bigger and higher" than Fort Jogighopa, while Fort Pāndu was "about equal to Fort Śrīghāt." The Assamese king attempted to send reinforcements to Śrīghāt, but before these arrived Mīr Jumla succeeded in capturing it. The Assam army of the fort escaped further eastward to Kājli. Fort Pāndu was also taken almost without any resistance, the Assamese forces fleeing at the approach of the Mughal army. Mīr Jumla next occupied Gauhati and from there advanced upon Fort Kājli, situated about 14 miles further eastward where the river Kalang joins the Brahmaputra. The Assamese deserted the fort which was occupied. The almost unopposed advance of Mīr Jumla upto Kājli began to create division in the ranks of the Assamese. At the last named place Makardhaj or Makropanj, the Rājā of Darrang who was subject to the king of Assam, submitted himself to the Mughals. He "came and paid his respects to the Nawab, presented an elephant, received a *Khal'at*, was promised protection and was ordered to travel with the army"<sup>1</sup>, which he did. With the capture of Gauhati and Kājli the recapture of the former Mughal dominion was complete.<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad Beg, a dependent of Mīr Jumla, was appointed *faujdār* of Gauhati, and Ḥasan Beg Zanganah, also a servant of the Nawwāb, was made *thānādār* of Kājli.

(d) *March into Assam proper*

After having stayed some days at Gauhati and having yet received no reply to his overtures from the king of Assam Mīr Jumla set out on 27 Jamādī II 1072 (7 Feb. 1662) on his expedition

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Bernier also testifies to the easy and quick capture of Kāmṛup. "Azo [Hajo, Kāmṛup] was besieged and taken," he writes, "in less than a fortnight". Bernier, p. 172.

into Assam proper. The march was directed towards Garhgaon, situated about 20 miles south-east of the river Brahmaputra near Sibsagar, the headquarters of the modern district of that name. He crossed with his army over to the southern bank of the river at a place called "Bartinah", midway between Gauhati and Tezpur. Here the Rājā of Dumriyah, one of the subjects of the Assamese king on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, tendered his submission and sent his nephew with an elephant to wait on Mīr Jumla, excusing himself from personal attendance due to sickness. The Assamese king now offered resistance. Thinking that Tezpur would be the furthest point to which the Mughals would advance "as it had been in former expeditions", the Assam Rājā strengthened and garrisoned the fortifications of Samdhara and Simlagarh, lying close to each other on the southern bank of the river opposite to Tezpur.<sup>1</sup> It was necessary first to take Simlagarh. It was "very strong and high" with defendants "as numerous as ants and locusts." It was surrounded by hills and high walls with guns placed on them and its approach was rendered almost impossible by a ditch and the "customary holes with *phanjis*" or sharpened bamboos fixed closely in the ground. On 11 Rajab 1072 (20 Feb. 1662) Mīr Jumla's army encamped at the foot of the fort. After some attempt at a siege and several skirmishes the final assault was delivered in the night of 15 Rajab led by Dilir Khān, Farhad Khān and Mīr Murtada. The Assamese offered a very stubborn resistance. Dilir Khān's elephant "received twenty-five wounds" and Aghar Khān and Farhad Khān were wounded. By uncommon courage Dilir Khān succeeded, however, in escalating the fort and capturing it. Mīr Jumla entered it the following day, 16 Rajab 1072 (26 Feb. 1662), and "was astonished to see the strength of the fortifications." Much war material was taken and a "good number" of Muslim men and women who had been forcibly detained in the fort were rescued.<sup>2</sup> After inspecting the fort Mīr Jumla encamped the same day at Kuliyabar, a neighbouring place. The fall of Simlagarh so dispirited the Assamese that they fled

<sup>1</sup> *F.I., op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> "Chamdhurah [Samdhara] lies opposite to Tezpur", writes Blochmann, "the maps giving a Mahall Chamdhoree and a place of the same name.... Simlagarh... is not on our maps, but it cannot be far from Tezpur, as it is said to be opposite to Chamdhurah", *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, p. 71 n.



from the Samdhara fort too which was next occupied by Mīr Jumla. "No marauding whatever was allowed" and Sayyid Nāṣir al-Dīn Khān was appointed *ṣaujḍār* of Kulyabar, and Sayyid Mirzā, Sayyid Nithār and Rājā Kishn Singh were left with a garrison at Samdhara.

The Assamese did not, however, completely give up their resistance. On 20 Rajab (2 March 1662) the Mughal army had to march at some distance from the river on account of hills along the bank and was thus separated from the fleet. The Assamese had been waiting for a naval attack at that strategic point. It so happened that the Mughal war-boats had also become separated into two groups, most probably on account of the strong currents against which they had to proceed, and about 100 of them under the command of Munawwar Khān Zamindar and 'Alī Beg sailed ahead of the rest. Suddenly after the evening prayer of 21 Rajab (3 March) a fleet of "7 or 800 hostile ships" attacked them. Munawwar Khān and 'Alī Beg heroically fought the unequal battle till the other ships arrived. The cannonade continued for the whole night which was heard by the army. Mīr Jumla promptly sent a large contingent under Muḥammad Mu'min Beg to assist the fleet. Mu'min Beg arrived on the spot early in the morning of the 22nd Rajab and immediately blew the victory trumpets. Finding that they were about to be surrounded by the Mughal forces on the river banks the Assamese fleet gave up the battle and escaped leaving behind "300 or 400" ships with a gun on each. A good many of the Assamese were killed and captured.

(e) *Capture of the capital Garhgaon :  
conciliatory measures*

After the fall of Simlagarh and the defeat at the naval battle above Kulyabar the Assamese king found it impossible to further meet the Mughal forces in any frontal engagement. He withdrew to the hills and henceforth had recourse only to "surprises and night attacks." Mīr Jumla next arrived at Solāghar where some emissaries from the Assam king came with proposals for peace. As their main "object was to cause delay or a decrease in vigilance" Mīr Jumla rejected them and pushed on "Lakhugarh",

most probably situated near the Majuli island, where he reached on 27 Rajab 1072 (9 March 1662). There another emissary met him with "a *pāndān*, a gold vessel, and two silver jars, 100 gold muhurs, and a submissive letter from the Rajah". The Nawwāb considered the letter insincere and sent a reply saying that he would soon be at Garhgaon "where alone he would treat with the Rajah".<sup>1</sup> Leaving the fleet at Lakhugarh Mīr Jumla now started on 1 Sha'bān (12 March 1662) for the capital Garhgaon. The route was very dangerous being intersected by *nulāhs* or rivulets, "in fact they are so numerous", writes the historian of the campaign, "that I cannot mention each singly".<sup>2</sup> Mīr Jumla had to advance with caution keeping always in mind the danger of surprise night attacks. In order to keep the lines of communication in the rear open he established *thānahs* or military outposts at short distances along the route. The first important outpost after Lakhugarh was Dewalgaon, where 'Alī Ridā was made *thā-nāhdār*. There the Nawwāb came across several Muslims who informed him that the Rāja had "kept a large number of Musalmans imprisoned, and had fled with his valuables to Nāmṛūp,"<sup>3</sup> the easternmost zone of Assam. Mīr Jumla therefore sent an advance party towards the capital to seize the elephants and other property which were still there. He himself entered Garhgaon on 16 Sha'bān 1072, (17 March 1662) after having established *thānahs* successively at Gājīpur, Taramhani or Tarah-hani and Namdang. "The next day many guns were recovered from the tanks into which the Rajah had thrown them before his flight; 82 elephants, and nearly three lacs of rupees in gold and silver, were also found. The number of guns which were captured, from the starting of the expedition till the return, was 675, among them a large iron gun the balls of which weighed 3 *mans* [about 110 kgs.]; 1343 *zamburaks*; 1200 *ramchangis*, and 6570 matchlocks, 340 *mans* of powder; 7828 shields; a large quantity of saltpetre, iron, sulphur, and lead; 1000 and odd ships,

<sup>1</sup> *F.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74. Elsewhere the historian notes. "It is said that the people who are now called Moslems in Assam are the descendants of the captives of Husain's [Hasain Shāh's] army", *ibid.*, p.79.

many of which accommodated 80, 70 and 60 sailors. Unfortunately 123 *bachari* ships, like of which no other existed in the dockyards at Garhgaon were burned, some Assamese having set fire to the *chhappars* under which they were kept. About 173 store houses for rice were discovered, over which matchlockmen were placed as guards, each of the houses containing from ten to one thousand *mans* of rice. These stores proved very useful".<sup>1</sup>

Mīr Jumla considered the spoils of war as the property of the state and conscientiously took care of them and sent them on to Jahāngirnagar. Manucci, the European traveller, who was passing through Dacca at that time, saw "huge boats which Mīr Jumla was sending with booty" from Assam.<sup>2</sup> Some riches were also recovered from vaults over graves. The Assamese used "to bury their dead with the head towards the east and the feet towards the west," writes Shihāb al-Dīn Tālīsh. "The chiefs erect funeral vaults for their dead, kill the women and servants of the deceased, and put necessities, etc., for several years, viz., elephants, gold and silver vessels, corpse, clothes, and food into the vaults. They fix the head of the corpse rigidly with poles, and put a lamp with plenty of oil and a *mashalchi* (torch-bearer) alive into the vault, to look after the lamp. Ten such vaults were opened by order of the Nawab, and property worth about 90,000 Rupees was recovered".<sup>3</sup> There was however no general desecration of graves or temples as such. On the contrary Mīr Jumla strictly forbade plunder of property and rape of women so that "not a single amir, trooper, soldier or camp-follower" could dare cast his covetous eyes on any one's property or woman. Though stern towards the enemies, Mīr Jumla followed a policy of moderation towards the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>2</sup> Manucci, Vol. II, p.100.

<sup>3</sup> *F.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.82. Some other Assamese peculiarities observed by the historian were that few "men have less than two wives; most have four or five" (*ibid.* p.80) and that the king's wife "only gives birth to daughters, and has no son" (*ibid.*, p.79). Some of the Assamese graves described by Tālīsh were also dug up during the British period (See *J.A.S.B.* Vol. XVII, part I, 1847, p.473). Col. Dalton informed Blochmann in a letter to him at the time of his translation of the *Fathiya-i-'Ibriya* as follows: "The account of the burial of Ahom magnates is confirmed by more recent disclosures of desecrated graves. About twenty years ago, several mounds, known to be graves of Ahom kings, were opened and were found to contain not only the remains of the kings, but of slaves, male and female, and of animals that had been immolated to serve their masters in Hades; also gold and silver vessels, food, raiment, arms, etc. were not wanting." Quoted by Blochmann in *F.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.82, n.

general people; and tried to win their hearts. By a general proclamation he assured them protection of life and property and exempted them from payment of revenue and cesses for one year. "Ryots, [Ra'yats] who had been compelled by the Ahoms to desert their villages, began to return in increasing numbers to the Mughal outposts like Lakhau and Dewalgaon and, being guaranteed protection, reoccupied their dwellings."<sup>1</sup> On the whole the people of the *Dakhinkol* or the region south of the Brahmaputra "were satisfied with their condition" and the people of the *Uttarkul* were also inclined to submit.<sup>2</sup> By another general proclamation Mīr Jumla released all Mughal subjects, Muslim or non-Muslim, held as prisoners or slaves by the Assamese king or distributed by him among his nobles.

(f) *The onset of early rains: Mīr Jumla's Difficulties*

The king of Assam had fled with his nobles, called *Phukans*, to Nāmrup, the easternmost part of his territory. It lay in "the hollow of three high ridges" and its climate was "worse than that of the well of Babel. The Rajahs used to banish to Namrup those whom their sword had spared." There was only one very difficult road to that part of the country. It began from the north of Garhgaon and passed at the start for a mile through a jungle "so dense that you can scarcely 'think' yourself through it". Thereafter it lay for about 12 miles through a pass full of stones and mud between two high mountains. The king's chief noble, or "Bargosain" (also called Bar Gohain) had established himself with his men at that place. The other *Phukans* "with a great number of men had encamped on an 'island' between the Brahmaputra and the Dihing river".<sup>3</sup> The pursuit of the enemy over such a terrain was difficult enough; and it was rendered almost impossible by the early onset of rains that year. About that time "it rained for three days and nights, and living in tents was impossible." Mīr Jumla intended to spend the rainy season at Lakhugarh, where the fleet lay anchored, but it was found impossible to transport the

<sup>1</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.251.

<sup>2</sup> *F.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.86.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85. Most probably the island referred to was the Majuli island.

conquered materials and elephants to that place before the full commencement of the rains. Hence he decided to move to Mathurapur on the foot of a hill about 7 miles south-east of Garhgaon. Accordingly he left a garrison at Garhgaon and placed Mīr Murtadā in charge of "all such stores as were to be kept and sent on to Jahāngīrnagar". Two *thānahs* or outposts were established to the south of Garhgaon, the one at Deopani with Ghāzī Khān as *thānahdār*, and the other at Salhati or Salpani, further south, with Miyāna Khān as its *thānahdār*. Jalāl Khān of Daryābād was appointed to guard the Dihing river on which Garhgaon stood. Making these arrangements, and staying at Garhgaon for only four days Mīr Jumla moved to Mathurapur on 20 Sha'bān (21 March 1662) and sent Adam Khān with a contingent as an advance guard 16 miles further towards Abhipur.

Soon the rains came down in full force flooding the entire country, dislocating communications and reducing the Mughal *thānahs* in effect into isolated camps amidst vast expanses of watery and muddy lands where their horses, dreaded most by the Assamese, were useless. For about six months, from April to September 1662, Mīr Jumla and his men remained practically beleaguered more by the inexorable climate of the land than by the valour of the Assamese. The latter did not, however, fail to take full advantage of the nature with which they were more at home, and made things really difficult for their enemies by constant guerilla and night attacks at the different posts including Garhgaon. It was with uncommon vigilance and exertions that Mīr Jumla could hold his own and save his 'flock' from total annihilation. It would have been a complete disaster, as Bernier observes, under "a less able commander."<sup>1</sup> It speaks much for Mīr Jumla's courage and fortitude that even under the most trying conditions he did not think of a retreat which, if attempted, would have been disastrous. The stores of rice which he captured at Garhgaon stood him in good stead. Ibn-i-Husain, the commander of the fleet anchored at Lakhugarh also wisely sent a flotilla with provisions under the command of Muḥammad Murād which arrived safely at Garhgaon up the river Dikho.

<sup>1</sup> Bernier, p. 173.

In their counter-offensive during the rainy season the Assamese naturally concentrated their attention on the lines of communication between Lakhugarh and Garhgaon. At the beginning of the rains they made a night attack on 'Alī Ridā, the *thānahdār* of Dewalgaon lying nearest to Lakhugarh. It was repulsed by the timely arrival of reinforcements sent by Mīr Jumla. The first notable success of the Assamese was their attack on the *thānāh* of Gajpur on 1 Shawwāl 1072 (9 May 1662). The *thānahdār* Anwar Beg and his men were killed and the Assamese, taking possession of the *thānah*, "made trenches on the other side of the Dihing as far as Lakhugarh, in order to cut off the supplies of the army."<sup>1</sup> A relieving force sent by the Nawwāb under Sarandāz Khān, assisted by the fleet under Muḥammad Murād (who had come with the provisions from Lakhugarh) could not advance much beyond Tik; and Muḥammad Murād who pushed forward on 14 Sha'bān (23 May) was defeated, "his whole fleet was captured and the sailors were killed." Four days afterwards, however, a strong reinforcement sent with Farhad Khān and Qarawal Khān, combined with Sarandāz Khan, inflicted a defeat upon the Assamese and captured forty-one ships from them.<sup>2</sup> A relieving flotilla sent by Ibn-i-Husain also succeeded in recapturing some of the vessels taken by the Assamese from Muḥammad Murād.<sup>3</sup> About this time the Bargosain's brother, with 10 to 12000 Assamese made an attack upon Ghāzī Khān's Deopani *thānāh*, then manned by only 20 horse and 50 foot. The attack was repulsed by the heroism of Ibrāhīm Khān, one of Ghāzī Khān's men, who killed the Assamese leader in a quick counter-attack whereupon the vast Assamese forces withdrew in painc. As the rains and floods heightened, however, the Assamese intensified their guerilla attacks on the different *thānahs*. Communications between the *thānahs* becoming almost impossible Mīr Jumla was obliged to withdraw his men from the *thānāhs* and concentrate them in Garhgaon and Mathurapur. The Assamese king came down from Nāmrup and took his abode in Solagori.

<sup>1</sup> *F.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.87-88.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

He entrusted the command of his men to Phukan Bijdili who, from a nearby position pressed on Garhgaon itself by night attacks. These were each time repulsed with difficulty. On 16 Dhu al-Hijja 1072 (15 July 1662) the Mughal forces under Rashīd Khān made a successful counter-attack on the Assamese entrenchment on the "Kakuja Nalah" and took 170 prisoners. By this time Mīr Jumla's capability to stand the war of endurance must have dawned on the Assamese, for Phukan Bijdili sent an ambassador to the Nawwāb and asked for cessation of hostilities. The latter communicated his willingness to do so if the Rājā agreed to keep to himself "Nāmrup and the whole of the mountainous districts", and to cede "that portion of Assam over which" the Mughals had passed and also to pay a specified war indemnity and yearly tribute. "The Phukan approved of the Articles and said that should the Rajah not accept them, he would himself come and join the Nawab."<sup>1</sup> Further progress in the peace talks was interrupted by the outbreak of a serious epidemic at Mathurapur, due to poisonous water and air from the hills, which carried away a large number of men and compelled Mīr Jumla to evacuate it and to move on to Garhgaon on 12 Muḥarram 1073 (17 August 1662). The Assamese looked upon this movement as a sign of weakness, and "Bijdili did not come, as he had promised."<sup>2</sup> The epidemic at Mathurapur took a heavy toll. Thus, "in the beginning of the war, Dilir Khān's detachment consisted of nearly 1500 horse, but at the end of the rains and his expedition to Nāmrup, he only mustered between 4 and 500."<sup>3</sup> Among the notables who died at Mathurapur was Makardhaj, the Rājā of Darrang who had submitted and accompanied the Mughal forces. Many wounded and sick people and "one-fourth" of the stores of *shālī* rice had to be left behind for want of conveyance. Several guns, being stuck in the mud, were also abandoned.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* One "Mr. Foster", an English officer at Nazirah, wrote to Blochmann in 1872 as follows: "There are numerous large iron guns in the neighbourhood. One seven miles from here is 18' 6", 6½" bore, and has 4 trunions. There are three 14" guns within a quarter mile of my bungalow. They will be lost in the river Dikho next season, being only some 15 feet from the bank which is rapidly cutting away. I think they must have been left by the Mughal army, when it returned in 1663". Quoted by Blochmann in *ibid.*, ii.

During the rains the Mughal officers in Kuch Bihar also had to abandon their posts. An attempt to make a revenue settlement there created some dissatisfaction among the people. Taking advantage of this and the absence of Mīr Jumla in far-off Assam, the Kuch King returned from Bhutan and defeated and killed the Mughal officer Muhammad Ṣālih at Kanthalbari. The other officer, Isfandiyār Khān, withdrew to Ghoraghat.

(g) *Resumption of the offensive and conclusion of peace*

By the end of August there was an abatement in the rains and floods began to recede. Early in Ṣafar 1073 (mid-September 1662) Dewalgaon was recovered. The rains ceased about the middle of Ṣafar (end of September) and on the 21st Rabī' I (24 October) the first supplies arrived by land and a week afterwards, on 28 Ṣafar (2 Nov.), the ships with the provisions reached Garhgaon. Mīr Jumla now resumed the offensive against the Assamese. The Rājā withdrew first to Solagori, and then to Nāmrup. Two of his principal 'Phukans' (nobles), Bijdili and Karkumba, had entrenched themselves on the Dilli river. Mīr Jumla directed his main attack on their position. On 8 Rabī' II (10 November) Abū-al-Ḥasan, a naval officer, was ordered to proceed with a fleet by the river and to take Bijdili's entrenchments in the rear, while Mīr Jumla himself advanced towards the Dihing river. Bijdili again sent an ambassador with proposals for peace; but his offers were not listened to. Under Abū-al-Ḥasan's pressure from the rear and the Nawwāb's advance on land Bijdili abandoned the entrenchment and withdrew. Mīr Jumla reached the Dihing river; but his health now began to give in. He had a "fainting fit." The Assamese had by now come to realize, however, that since Mīr Jumla and his forces could not be dislodged in the rainy season, they could not in any way be resisted in the dry season. This realization created a division in the ranks of the Assamese. Badli Phukan along with his three brothers paid respects to Mīr Jumla and joined him. Some other nobles also meditated submission. The defection of the Phukans alarmed the Rājā who, either being dissatisfied with Bijdili's conduct of the war or suspecting desertion on his part, "killed him and his whole family, males and



females."<sup>1</sup>

The desertion of Badli Phukan proved to be a definite turning point in the campaign. He collected under him "between three and four thousand fighting men" and submitted a plan to haunt down the Rājā. Mīr Jumla appointed him *sūbahdār* of the country between Garhgaon and Nāmrup and on 1 Jamādī I 1073 (1 Dec. 1662) sent with him a detachment under Darwish Beg to occupy Solagori. They reached the place on the 6th Jamādī I (6th December). Mīr Jumla himself crossed the Dihing river on the 7th and advanced towards Nāmrup. The Rājā now sent requests to conclude peace, but these were rejected. Two days afterwards, however, Mīr Jumla had an "attack of fever and severe pain in the chest." Still he moved forward and travelled by *pālki* one stage further and reached Batam or Patam, "on the outskirts of the Nāmrup jungles," on the 14th. The Assam Rājā now renewed his application for peace and specially requested Dilir Khān to intercede on his behalf with the Nawwāb. The latter, partly because of his illness and partly due to the insistence of his officers like Dilir Khān, opened negotiations. The following conditions were finally agreed upon:

- (1) The Rājā was to send one of his daughters to the imperial harem;
- (2) He was to pay an immediate war indemnity of 20,000 *tolahs* of gold, 120,000 *tolahs* of silver, and 35 elephants (15 each for Mīr Jumla and the emperor, and 5 for Dilir Khān);
- (3) Further, within the following one year he was to pay 3 *lacs* of *tolahs* of silver and 90 elephants, "in three four-monthly instalments";
- (4) Till the fulfilment of the conditions in (3) above the sons of four of his principal nobles, Budh Gosain, Karkas-ha, Bar Gosain and Prabatar, were to remain as hostages with the Nawwāb;
- (5) Thereafter he was to furnish 20 elephants annually as tribute;
- (6) The following territories were to be ceded to the Mughal dominion: the *Uttarkol* or to the north of the Brahmaputra, *Sarkar Drrang* "bounded by Gauhati on one side and the Ali Burari (Bhareli river), which passes Fort Chamdhurah (Samdhara) on the other side"; and in the *Dakhinkol*, or to the south of the Brahmaputra, the "District of Nakirani", the "Naga Hills", "Beltali" and "Dumuriah";
- (7) Finally, all inhabitants of Kāmrup kept as prisoners by the Rājā "in the hills and in Nāmrup were to be restored; so also the family of Badli Phukan."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94; also *A.N.*, p. 808; *Riyāḍ.*, p. 226 n.

The territories thus specified may be easily identified. To the north of the Brahmaputra the boundary was fixed at the river "Ali Burari" (Bhareli) which meets the Brahmaputra about 10 miles east of the modern town of Tezpur. Regarding the *Dakhinkol* to the south of the Brahmaputra, the historian of the campaign takes care to explain that the district Nakirani "lies near the Garo hills", and that Dumuriah "extends as far as the Kulang river" and "borders on Kachhar" from which in former times "elephants used to come into Dumuriah".<sup>1</sup> The river "Kulang" or Kalang meets the Brahmaputra about 15 miles east of modern Gauhati town. Blochmann, the translator of the *Fathiya-i-'Ibriya*, suggests that by the "Naga hills" the "Mikir and Rengma Naga hills" appears to be meant.<sup>2</sup> These two hills extend over parts of modern Nowgong and Sibsagar districts. It may further be mentioned that the three principal contributories that meet in the hills to form the Kalang river downstream originate in the Mikir hills, the Rengma hills and the hills of Kachhar. No explanation is available regarding "Beltali". By collating the above pieces of information, however, it would seem that the territories to the south of the Brahmaputra included, besides the lower parts of modern Goalpara and Kāmrup districts, the districts of Garo hills (lying to the north of Mymensingh district) and Khasia and Jaintia hills (lying to the north of Sylhet and north-north-west of Kachhar), and the greater part of the Nowgong district bounded by the upper stretches of the Kalang river and the Mikir hills.<sup>3</sup>

The above mentioned conditions were accepted and the treaty was mutually signed. On 5 Jamādī II (4 January 1663) the Rājā sent "his daughter, the gold and silver, ten elephants and the hostages to the Nawab, and promised to send thirty elephants more to Lakhugarh."<sup>4</sup> On 9 Jamādī II eleven more elephants were

<sup>1</sup> *F.I., op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, n.

<sup>3</sup> This identification of the boundary is further supported by what Shihāb al-Dīn Tālish says a little later, in connection with the Nawwāb's return, that after starting from Lakhugarh (near the Majuli island) he "inspected on his road portions of Dumuriah, now annexed, and passed in palki over Kajli plain, where never before an army had passed. On the first and second days, he travelled eight Kos daily; on the third, fourteen; on the fourth, twelve. He then passed the Kulang river and then fort Kajli". (*Ibid.*, p. 95). Thus the territory over which he traversed for about 84 miles (8 + 8 + 14 + 12 koses, each Kos being about 2 miles) before reaching the Kulang river were considered as annexed territory.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

brought in, and before Mīr Jumla left for Lakhugarh all the prisoners whom the Rājā had detained in Nāmrup, and 20 other elephants sent by him arrived. Similarly Mīr Murtaḍa also brought down all the stores captured at Garhgaon.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. MĪR JUMLA'S RETURN AND DEATH

Thus having obtained the submission of the Assam Rājā and annexed the greater part of his kingdom, Mīr Jumla gave the order to return on 10 Jamādi II (9 January 1663). On the whole the campaign was an unprecedented success. "The territories of the Dakhinkol that were ceded," justly noted the historian of the campaign, had "at no previous time formed part of his Majesty's empire."<sup>2</sup> The return was no forced retreat, as it has sometimes been suggested; it was a triumphal coming back. Indeed, Mīr Jumla resolved to go, in the course of his return journey, to Gauhati to settle "financial matters" and then to march against Kuch Bihar. Therefore, he "embarked with the hostages at Lakhugar, sending the principal part of the army via the Dakhinkol to Baritalah" where they were to cross the Brahmaputra.<sup>3</sup> At Kajli, near the mouth of the Kulang river, Mīr Jumla was also visited by the mother of Makardhaj, the deceased Rājā of Darrang, and the mother and nephew of the Rājā of Dumuriah who were allowed to return to their homes. Rashīd Khān was appointed *faujdār* of Kāmrup, with his headquarters at Gauhati, and Muḥammad Beg, the former *faujdār* of the place, was appointed *thānāhdār* of Kajli, under Rashīd Khān. The annexed territories were to be looked after by these latter two officials, the successors of the Rājā of Darrang and the Rājā of Dumuriah being evidently required to cooperate as subordinate allies.

After resting for a few days at Kajli and making the above mentioned administrative arrangements, and also collecting the elephants which Muḥammad Beg had captured in Darrang,<sup>4</sup> Mīr

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *F.I., op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Jumla proceeded to Gauhati. There he "settled several financial matters of great importance" and left for Baritala on the 26th Rajab 1073 (22 Feb. 1663). He stayed at the latter place for 26 days. Here his illness "got much worse, the fainting fits came on oftener". The doctors urgently advised him to return to the capital. Accordingly on 26 Sha'bān he appointed 'Askar Khān to renew operations against Kuch Bihar and started by boat for Jahāngīrnagar. On 2 Ramaḍān 1073 (30 March 1663) he died on the way, "two kos above Khizirpur [Narayanganj]".

Mīr Jumla's death before he could return to the capital did indeed add an element of disaster to the Assam expedition, but he did not in fact return in defeat with his army terribly depleted or fleet destroyed. Apart from the toll taken by the epidemic at Mathurapur, the loss of men was rather negligible. Nowhere did his army suffer any defeat. The fleet also returned intact,<sup>1</sup> rather vastly enlarged by the large number of captured Assamese war vessels. The immediate war indemnity in gold, silver and elephants had been paid and brought along with the hostages to Bengal. The daughter of the Assamese king was subsequently converted to Islam and married to prince Muḥammad A'zam, her name being changed to Rahmat Bānu.<sup>2</sup> The defeat, disgrace and loss of territory so broke down king Jaidhaj of Assam that he died a few months afterwards in the same year (1663).<sup>3</sup> Because of his death the further war-indemnity payable over a period of one year, and the subsequent yearly tribute of 20 elephants, do not appear to have been paid; but the Mughal authority over the ceded territories in the *Uttarkol* and the *Dakhinkol*, created into a sort of buffer territories under the management of the subordinate Rājās of Darrang and Dumuria, continued to be acknowledged; while the Mughal *faujdār* at Gauhati and the *thānāhdār* at Kajli remained undisturbed at least for four years more, when once again troubles broke out in these quarters.<sup>4</sup>

Mīr Jumla was a great man, great alike in war and peace. His

<sup>1</sup> The loss of a small fleet at Dewalgaon was subsequently retrieved and most of the vessels were recovered. See *supra*, p. 414.

<sup>2</sup> *Ma'āthir-i-'Ālamgiri*, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Assamese Buranjī* (The Assam Chronicle), quoted in *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> See *A.N.*, p. 1068; also *M.A.*, p. 65.

record as a general and administrator in both the Deccan and Bengal is brilliant. Leaving aside the time spent in the Kuch-Assam campaign, Mīr Jumla governed Bengal practically for only one and a half years. Yet during this short period he succeeded in firmly establishing the authority of his sovereign in the province, in regularizing the administration and, in general, in setting the house in order after the unsettling civil war. Himself a sincere Muslim, his revenue measures and administration of justice were based on the principles of the *sharī'at* and on humane considerations. In the Assam war, as in his other campaigns, he did not allow his soldiery to commit any excess and looked scrupulously to the welfare of the conquered people. He served his master ably, faithfully and tenaciously.

The imputation of his having ever entertained feelings of insubordination, as suggested by the European writers, is ill-founded and is not at all borne out by the facts. The Assam war was not the outcome of his inordinate personal ambition, nor that of the supposed machiavellian intentions of his sovereign. It was essentially a war forced upon the Mughals, as on the previous occasions. Mīr Jumla's arrangements with the Rājās of Darrang and Dumuria leaving them in possession of their estates in subordinate alliance with the Mughals appear to be a practical and politic measure based on a correct realization of the situation on the north-eastern frontier of the Mughal dominions. His dealings with the European companies trading in Bengal were also just, based on due regard to the interests of the state and the traders. The view that he attempted to establish a personal monopoly of trade articles in the Deccan and Bengal is totally unfounded, based on a perfunctory study of a few isolated communications of the English factors, without collating them with their other records and without taking an overall view of his relations with them. It is not for nothing that the English agents in Bengal regretted his death equally, if not more, than the others.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SHĀISTA KHĀN: CONQUESTS AND ADMINISTRATION

( 1074-1088, 1089-1098/1664-1678, 1679-1688 )

#### I: THE SITUATION AFTER MĪR JUMLA'S DEATH

Mīr Jumla's death "produced, as might be expected, a great sensation throughout the *Indies*."<sup>1</sup> It had naturally an unsettling effect in Bengal in that some of the measures which needed urgent attention were deferred till the arrival of a new viceroy. The expedition into Kuch Bihar, entrusted to 'Askar Khān was not pushed through. The latter advanced only upto and occupied the "*chakla* of Fathpur, outside the embankment of Kuch Bihar but belonging to that kingdom," and waited there. The projected expedition against Arakan which Mīr Jumla intended to undertake after his return from Assam also naturally remained in abeyance. During his absence in Assam a famine had broken out at Dacca due partly to the prolonged rains and floods of that year, coupled with a hurricane which visited the area,<sup>2</sup> and partly to the unscrupulousness of the grain dealers. It may be recalled that Mīr Jumla had to fine the grain dealers for their unconscionable bargains on the eve of his departure for the Assam campaign.<sup>3</sup> The famine had indeed subsided before Mīr Jumla's return; but the work of rehabilitation and reconstruction needed immediate attention.

The principal officers on the spot, having now no one over them to supervise and coordinate their activities, seem to have engaged themselves for a time in mutual jealousy and rivalry. The two main factions grouped respectively round Ihtishām Khān, whom Mīr Jumla had left in charge of the province during the Assam campaign, and Dilir Khān, the second in command of the army who had accompanied the late viceroy in his expedition. Each of them now attempted to strengthen his position and influence by granting favours to their respective adherents and supporters. Shihāb al-Dīn Tālīsh, the historian, appears to have

<sup>1</sup> Bernier, p.173.

<sup>2</sup> E.F.I., 1661-1664, p.176.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p.383.

found himself out of favour and he gives vent to his aggrieved feelings thus: "Everyone asked for every thing that he fancied, and these officials granted it with the utmost liberality like issuing an order on a river to supply water to a petitioner. This they considered a cheap way of gaining fame. Those men, including the author, who did not supplicate these upstart officials, got nothing."<sup>1</sup> The embittered author further states that the chief officials, failing to agree among themselves, said the 'Īd-al-Fitr prayer, which followed less than four weeks after Mīr Jumla's death, at three different places in the same town of Khizirpur; and that "all the experienced and able officers" of the former regimes left the province for the imperial court.

The last statement of the historian is clearly incorrect, while his other remarks about the state of affairs immediately following Mīr Jumla's death are also obviously exaggerated. Yet there is nothing in his account to warrant the supposition that there was "political disorder in the province" and that the "break-down in the internal administration of Bengal which followed Shujā's departure from the province in December 1657 to contest the throne, ended only six years later with Shāista Khān's entry into Rajmahal as subahdār on 8th March 1664".<sup>2</sup> True, Mīr Jumla spent almost half the period of his viceroyalty in his Assam expedition; but there was no break-down in the administration during that time, nor in fact during the war of succession. Whatever slight dislocation had been caused by that war was set right by a few reallocation of offices by Mīr Jumla so that he felt

<sup>1</sup> Tālish's "Continuation," quoted in *H.B.* II, p.372.

<sup>2</sup> Jadunath Sarkar in *H.B.*, II pp.371, 372. Sarkar seems to have even strained Tālish's exaggerated statements in order to cast more discredit on the officers. Thus Sarkar writes (*H.B.* II, p.371): "It took the officers at Dacca seven weeks to report Mīr Jumla's death to the Emperor, who was then in far-off Lahore, enroute to Kashmir, and to receive his order on the vacancy thus created... These orders reached Dacca on 17th May 1663..." Mīr Jumla died on 31 March, so that the orders were received exactly after 6 weeks and two days. Surely the whole time was not taken by the supposed negligence of the officers. In fact Aurangzeb received the news of Mīr Jumla's death on 23 April; that is after 3 weeks and 2 days. Clearly another three weeks' time was taken in the transmission of the imperial order from Lahore to Dacca. Thus an equal period was taken for the news to travel from Dacca to Lahore and back to Dacca. The information about Mīr Jumla's death was therefore sent from Dacca on the same or the following day of Mīr Jumla's death. Interestingly enough, Sarkar's expression has duped at least another writer, who follows him closely, to state boldly: "It took the Bengal officers seven weeks to send the report of Mīr Jumla's death to the emperor who was in Lahore enroute to Kashmir." (A.C. Roy, *History of Bengal: Mughal period 1526-1756*, Calcutta, 1968 p.257).

free to undertake the Assam expedition only a year and a half after his assumption of office as viceroy. Even Shāista Khān, when he arrived at Rajmahal was not obliged to devote his immediate attention to repairing the supposedly broken-down administration of the province. On the contrary, he found it so settled and stable that he chose to stay at Rajmahal for more than seven months, before proceeding to Dacca, in order to deal with the insubordination of the Kuch Bihar Rājā. The various administrative measures which Shāista Khān adopted were all concerned with matters of detail,<sup>1</sup> and do not in any way indicate an administrative break-down prior to his arrival.

The news of Mir Jumla's death reached Aurangzeb, then at Lahore on his way to Kashmir, on 23 April 1663.<sup>2</sup> The latter was naturally very sorry and treated the deceased Viceroy's son, Muhammad 'Amīn, with particular favour confirming him in his post of *bakhshī* increasing his allowance by one thousand rupees per month, and selected him sole heir to his father's property.<sup>3</sup> As for Bengal the emperor recalled Ihtishām Khān to court, transferred Dā'ūd Khān, then *sūbahdār* of Bihar, to Bengal to act as *sūbahdār* there pending the appointment of a substantive *sūbahdār*, and asked Dilir Khān to govern Bengal till the arrival of Dā'ūd Khān. These orders reached Dacca on 17 May 1663. That there had been no administrative break-down or "political disorder" is further proved by the fact that these orders were carried out smoothly. Ihtishām Khān proceeded to Delhi with the deceased viceroy's family members, his property and elephants, and the treasure and war trophies from Assam. Dilir Khān held charge of the province till 27 September when Dā'ūd Khān took over as acting *sūbahdār*. He undertook the work of relief and rehabilitation at Dacca with all earnestness and on his own responsibility remitted that year's *zakāt* on grain.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 427-433.

<sup>2</sup> Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Bernier, p. 173. Bernier's statement that Aurangzeb became in fact happy at the death of Mir Jumla of whose power and influence he is alleged to have been apprehensive is a pure conjecture and is in conflict with the testimony of the, *Ālamgīrnāmah*.

<sup>4</sup> Tālish's "Continuation", p. 112a.



## II. SHĀISTA KHĀN'S ARRIVAL: RESUBJUGATION OF KUCH BIHAR

Dā'ūd Khān was relieved by Shāista Khān. The latter was a son of Yamīn al-Daulat 'Āṣaf Khān, and a brother of Mumtāz Maḥal, and as such a maternal uncle of emperor Aurangzeb. The latter held him in great esteem and, on Mīr Jumla's death, conferred on him the title of *Amīr al-'umarā'* and appointed him viceroy in Bengal. Prior to his coming to Bengal Shāista Khān had won many laurels in war and had served in various important capacities including the viceroyalties in Bihar, Agra and the Deccan. He was thus ripe with years and experience when he came to Bengal, being 63 years old<sup>1</sup> at that time. Yet he retained his vigour and energy<sup>1</sup> and administered the province worthily and efficiently for a quarter of a century with the exception of only one year's interval after a continuous tenure for 14 years.

The viceroyalty of Shāista Khan is notable for a number of important achievements and events. He carried out a number of useful reforms in the administration aiming at affording relief to *jāgīrdārs*, *aimadārs* and *madad-i-ma'āsh* holders of rent-free lands. These enabled a large number of Muslims to settle down peacefully and permanently in the land. Secondly, besides resubjugating Kuch Bihar, he effected the reconquest of Chittagong and thus delivered the people of lower Bengal from the age-old devastations of the Magh and Feringi pirates who had their base of operations in that part of the country. This achievement alone entitles him to the gratitude of posterity. Thirdly, under his administration Bengal enjoyed a long period of continued peace unknown since the time of the Husainī rulers. Agriculture, trade and commerce flourished under his liberal

<sup>1</sup> Jadunath Sarkar's statement that Shāista Khan, when he came to Bengal, "was a tired old man, who left campaigning to his subordinates, especially his many able sons, while he himself spent his days in ease and pleasure amidst his numerous harem", (*H.B.* II, p. 373) is palpably prejudiced, and is not supported by any stretching of the contemporary sources, including even the hostile notices of the English East India Company's agents. In fact Sarkar appears to be particularly inclined to paint a dark picture about Shāista Khān and concentrates his discussion on the viceroy's supposed leisurely life in the *harem*, "extravagance", accumulation of wealth by "extorting" the people, oppression of the foreign merchants, ending up in war with the English. Even the numerous architectural achievements of Shāista Khān are depicted as his costly extravagance and the unusual cheapness of grain during his time is sought to be belittled by the ludicrous statement that "Dacca being in the centre of the 'ricebowl' of Bengal," the cheapness of grain "need not excite any surprise". (*Ibid.* p. 387).

policy and patronage, and there was an unprecedented economic prosperity in the country. Fifthly, Shāista Khān devoted his time and energy to many useful public works, such as construction of buildings and mosques, roads, bridges, and *sarāis*. He also followed a just and benevolent policy towards the foreign merchants. It was only with the English, whose trade was much less than that of the Dutch, that he could not pull on well till the end. Understandably, they have accused him of injustice and oppression. Taking a longer view, and judging from subsequent events, it appears, however, that of all the Mughal administrators of the time it was perhaps Shāista Khān who could first realize the true nature and intentions of the English in Bengal.

Shāista Khān reached Rajmahal on 8 March 1664 (1074 H.), and halted there to deal with the rebellious Rājā of Kuch Bihar. The viceroy sent his son to Dacca and announced his intention to march against Kuch Bihar. The Rājā, who had taken advantage of Mīr Jumla's absence in Assam and then of his illness and death, knew well that he could not withstand the Mughal forces. Hence he hastened to send a letter of submission and apology to Shāista Khān and promised to pay a tribute of five and a half *lakhs* of rupees (550,000). The viceroy accepted this offer and recalled 'Askar Khān and his forces from the Kuch Bihar border areas.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the Rājā of Jaintia (in Assam) who had been creating troubles on the Sylhet frontier, sent a letter of submission and his best elephant on hearing of the arrival of Shāista Khān in Bengal.<sup>2</sup> There was no further trouble in the Kuch Bihar and Kāmrup region till 1667 (1078 H.) In that year the Assamese, presumably taking advantage of Shāista Khān's preoccupation with Chittagong which had just then been conquered, attacked Gauhati and defeated and killed its *thānahdār*, Sayyid Fīrūz Khān. An expedition was thereupon sent there under Rājā Rām Singh, assisted by other *manṣabdār*s. The Assamese were expelled and the Mughal authority was reestablished in those quarters.<sup>3</sup> In 1685 the Kuch Rājā (Mādh Nārāyan) withheld payment of tribute,

<sup>1</sup> Tālish's 'Continuation', p. 121 a, b.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117 a.

<sup>3</sup> A.N., p. 1068; M.A., pp. 65, 154.

which is stated to be ten *lakhs* of rupees. Accordingly Shāista Khān directed his son Irādat Khān, who was *thānahdār* at Rangamati in Kāmrūp, to lead an expedition into Kuch Bihar. The Rājā fled from the country and Kuch Bihar was annexed. It continued to remain in the Mughal possession till the end of Aurangzeb's reign.

### III: ADMINISTRATIVE AND REVENUE MEASURES

Shāista Khān left Rajmahal on 16 October and reached Dacca on 13 December 1664. During the first two years of his viceroyalty he carried out a number of administrative and revenue measures side by side with making preparations for the conquest of Chittagong. His first important measure was a continuation of the work started by Mīr Jumla of regularizing the pay and *jāgīrs* (land assignments) of the *mansabdārs*. The latter had their *jāgīrs* situated in different *parganahs* (revenue divisions). The multiplicity of co-partners in respect of a particular *pargana* which such a system entailed necessarily led to waste in the process of collection of the revenue, "as many *shiqdārs* and '*amlahs* had to be sent out by [every] *jāgīrdār*". It also led to repeated demands and occasional oppression on the *ra'yats* (cultivators). Shāista Khān therefore ordered the *dīwān-i-tan* (Paymaster) to give every *jāgīrdār* his *tankha* (pay or livelihood) in one place only; and if in any *pargana* any revenue remained over and above the *tankha* of a *jāgīrdār*, "it was to be made over to the *jāgīrdār* for collection and payment into the public treasury."<sup>1</sup> The *dīwān-i-tan* assiduously carried out this measure. It saved the department of crown lands a lot of money because it did not have to appoint collectors of its own in the *parganahs* of the *jāgīrdārs*; while the latter were saved the trouble of drawing their *tankha* from different places. Above all, it did away with the evil of repeated demands on the *ra'yats*. Next Shāista Khān turned his attention to the appointments and promotions made by the acting *shābahdārs* after Mīr Jumla's death. It was found that these were in many cases unnecessary or superfluous. "Most of these men were now dismissed; a few who

<sup>1</sup> Tālish's "Continuation", pp.117 a.b.

were necessary for the administration, were retained in service."<sup>1</sup>

Shāista Khān's third measure related to the various types of Muslim settlers in the land, who held rent-free lands as *madad-i-ma'āsh* or *'aima*. These two terms referred to lands granted rent-free to Muslim religious leaders, learned men and others of noble birth who deserved state help. It may be recalled that Mīr Jumla had confirmed in his own *jāgīrs* such rent-free landholders who were noted for learning and virtue "and some who had got *farmāns* from the Emperor." With regard to all the other men who had been enjoying *madad-i-ma'āsh* and pensions in the crown lands or in the assignments of the *jāgīrdārs* he asked the *ṣadr*, Qādī Rizwī, to enquire into their cases. The latter is stated to have rejected the *sanads* of many such rent-free landholders. Their stipends and subsistence allowances were cancelled. Not that they were ousted from their lands, but they were to "till all the lands held in *Madad-i-ma'āsh*, and pay revenue for them to the department of Crownlands or to the *Jāgīrdārs*." These orders were strictly enforced. It was alleged that many of these men, unable to pay the revenue, "sold their property" or "pledged their children".<sup>2</sup> Even "the chastisement and pressure of the *'amlās* (officers)" could not make these men engage in cultivation. So the land remained "waste and the *'aimadārs* poor and aggrieved." However, these men now took their case to Shāista Khān who made the following arrangements:

(a) with regard to the Crownlands he ordered the *ṣadr*, Mīr Sayyid Ṣādiq, to fully recognize the *madad-i-ma'āsh* and *wazīfā* which these men had been enjoying "according to the reliable *sanads* of former rulers."<sup>3</sup>

(b) As for what was held rent-free in the *jāgīrs* of the *jāgīrdārs*, it was ordered that if the lands thus held "amounted to one-fortieth of the total revenue of the *jāgīrdār*, he should consider it as the *zakāt* on his property and spare it. But if the rent-free land exceeded one-fortieth [of the total *jāgīr*], the *jāgīrdār* was at liberty to respect or resume [the excess]."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117 b.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118 a. Tālīsh's account here is clearly exaggerated in order to eulogize Shāista Khān.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120 b.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

(c) As regards the *jāgīr* of Shāista Khān himself it was ordered that "whosoever held whatever rent-free land in the parganaḥs of the *jāgīr* of the Nawwāb, on the strength of the *sanad* of whosoever, was to be confirmed in it without any diminution, and was on no account to be troubled [by demand of revenue]".<sup>1</sup>

(d) "As for those who had no means of subsistence and now, for the first time, begged daily allowances and lands in the *jāgīr* of the Nawwāb, the *dīwānī* officers were ordered to further their desires without any delay."<sup>2</sup>

Tālīsh records that the *sadr* carried out the above orders in the case of the crown lands and the *jāgīrs* of the *jāgīrdārs*, while in the case of the *jāgīr* of the Nawwāb his *dīwān-i-bayūta*, Khwājah Murlidhar, accomplished the work with "zeal and exertion." "Every day two to three hundred *'aimadārs* presented their *sanads* to him and then departed. Next day, in the presence of the Nawwāb, he passed them through the record office and sealed them, and then gave them back to the *'aimadār*. In short, he exhibited such great labour and praiseworthy diligence in this business, that everyone of this class of men got what he desired."<sup>3</sup> Fourthly, Shāista Khān adopted a series of other revenue measures to ameliorate the condition of the people. (i) "He ordered that in the parganaḥs of his own *jāgīr* everything collected by the revenue officers above the fixed revenue should be refunded to the ryots [*ra'yats*]."<sup>4</sup> (ii) He "restored absolute freedom of buying and selling" of all articles of food and clothing and many other things, and abolished any kind of *ijāra* or monopoly of these articles.<sup>5</sup> (iii) He also abolished the practice of preferential purchase of elephants and other animals by high officials. "Whenever ships brought elephants and other [animals] to the ports of the province," writes Tālīsh, "the men of the *Šūbahdār* used to attach (*qurq*) them and take whatever they selected at prices of their own liking. Shāista

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121 a.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127 b.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Khān forbade it.”<sup>1</sup> (iv) In pursuance of Aurangzeb’s orders he abolished “the collection of *zakāt* from merchants and travellers, and of customs (*hāsil*) from artificers trades-men and new-comers, Hindus and Musalmans alike.”<sup>2</sup> The emperor’s orders were “for abolishing them in the parganahs of the Crownland” but, says Tālīsh, “this just, God-fearing, benevolent governor, out of his sense of justice and devotion to God, abolished the *hāsil* amounting to 15 lacs of rupees which used to be collected in his own jāgīr, and he thus chose to please God, relieve the people, and follow his religious master (Aurangzeb).”<sup>3</sup> (v) He also abolished a practice called *ankura*. “In many parganahs”, writes Tālīsh, “the despicable practice had long existed that when a man, ryot [ra’yat] or new-comer (*Khushnashīn*), died without leaving any son, all his property including even his wife and daughter was taken possession of by the department of the Crownlands or the jāgirdār or zemindar who had such power; and this custom was called *ankura*. The Nawwāb put down this wicked thing.”<sup>4</sup>

It is to be noted here that Tālīsh, in order to praise Shāista Khān and to bring him into bolder relief, has often made inaccurate and exaggerated statements about his predecessors. Thus, in connection with the restoration of freedom of buying and selling of articles of food etc. (No. ii in the above paragraph) Tālīsh states in general terms that the “former governors of Bengal used to make monopolies (*ijāra*) of all articles of food and clothing” and then “sell them at fanciful rates which the helpless people had to pay.”<sup>5</sup> Obviously this is an exaggerated statement which should not be taken as a correct description of the conduct of the “former governors”. Most probably the evil complained of and remedied by Shāista Khān had reference to the practice of some unconscionable traders whom Mīr Jumla had found it necessary to punish by a fine, or to others who had indulged in such monopolistic practices during the famine and the transitional period from Mīr Jumla’s death till Shāista Khān’s arrival.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.131 a.b.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131 b.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127 b.

Similarly Tālīsh's statement about the abolition of *zakāt* has also to be taken with caution. The payment of *zakāt* is an obligatory duty upon a Muslim having specified property qualifications. No Muslim ruler, not to speak of Aurangzeb who asked his viceroys to follow the rules of the *sharī'at* in matters of administration, could have ordered for "the abolition of the collection of *zakāt*" as such. In fact Tālīsh's grouping of "merchants and travellers" in this connection is rather confusing. "Travellers" as such are no specific category of persons for the payment of *zakāt*. The emperor's order regarding the *zakāt* might therefore mean its remission for the time being with regard to persons or areas hard-hit by the late famine. Equally obscure is Tālīsh's description of the practice of *ankura* which Shāista Khān abolished. In every system of law there is some rule for reversion to the state of the property of a person who dies without any heir. In Islam there are specific rules of inheritance for both male and female heirs of a deceased person. In the Hindu law daughters are not eligible for inheriting their father's property, but there is provision for wives to inherit their husband's property. It is therefore not understandable why, if a man died without leaving any son, "all his property including even his wife and daughter" should have been taken "possession of by the department of Crownlands or the jāgirdār or zaminder". Surely something else remains to be said regarding the "practice". Whatever might have been its nature, however, it goes to Shāista Khān's credit that he did away with it.

Lastly, Shāista Khān adopted some measures to straighten the administration of justice. (a) "Every day he held open *darbār* for administering justice, and quickly redressed wrongs. He regarded this as his most important duty."<sup>1</sup> (b) In the police stations (*Kotwālī chabutras*) it was formerly the custom that "when a man proved a loan or claim against another, or a man's stolen property [was recovered], the clerks of the *chabutra*, in paying to the claimant his due, used to seize for the state one-fourth of it under the name of 'fee for exertion'. The Nawwāb abolished it."<sup>2</sup> (c) Similarly he abolished the daily fee payable by plaintiffs in the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127 a.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131 b.

criminal court. It is stated that when the plaintiff and defendant presented themselves at the magistracy, both of them were kept confined lest they should wilfully delay the proceedings, or they were released on surety in which case they had to pay a daily fee. "This custom, too, was now abolished."<sup>1</sup>

Thus Shāista Khān effected a number of useful and beneficial reforms. The abolition of co-partnership of *jāgirdārs* in a *parganah* and the prohibition against collecting anything over and above the specified revenue from the *ra'yats* went a long way in relieving the latter and in encouraging agriculture in the country. The orders regarding *madad-i-ma'āsh* and *'aima* rent-free landholders enabled many Muslims of merit and distinction to settle peacefully and permanently in the land. Similarly his abolition of trade monopolies and of customs and tolls not only benefited the general people but also paved the way for an unprecedented development of trade and commerce. It may be noted here that there is no ground for supposing, as has been done by Jadunath Sarkar, that Shāista Khān reversed this policy or allowed it to fall into abeyance later in his viceroyalty. Sarkar writes: "It is true that Shihābuddin Tālish asserts that Shāista Khan on his coming to Bengal in 1664 abolished the trade monopolies of his predecessors and the *abwābs* forbidden by imperial orders. But the European testimony on Shāista Khān's covetousness and extortion is unassailable."<sup>2</sup> Sarkar explains away "Tālish's contrary assertion" by saying that his work stops with the third year of Shāista Khān's viceroyalty and that the author did not live to complete or revise his book. "It would be reasonable to suppose" writes Sarkar, "that Shāista Khan did at first issue orders abolishing the monopolies, but that after a few years his subordinates took advantage of his supine rule to feed his prodigal luxury by raising money in the old wicked ways, and he asked no question."<sup>3</sup> As already mentioned,<sup>4</sup> Sarkar seems to be particularly inclined to villify Shāista Khān. In fact Sarkar's entire chapter on the viceroy is geared to that end.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.II*, p.375.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, p.425,n.1.



Shāista Khān's relation with the foreign companies, particularly the English, has been noted in some detail at a later stage of this work. It will be found there that Sarkar's study of the "European", or rather the English sources, is purfunctory, and he appears to be more prejudiced than the English agents themselves. Far from being "unassailable", Sarkar's "European testimony" is neither always correct, nor essentially disinterested. Characteristically enough, while treating Tālish's account as having reference only to the first three years of Shāista Khān's viceroyalty, Sarkar calls in that authority for his final indictment against the viceroy. Thus in an attempt to belittle the viceroy's unquestioned fame Sarkar says that a correct interpretation of Tālish's account would show that "Shāista Khan's fame in Bengal was due to the easy Oriental way of gaining popularity with the vulgar by living in a regal style of pomp and prodigality, supporting a vast parasite class of useless servants and hangers on, and practising indiscriminate charity to an army of pretended saints and theologians, loafers calling themselves religious mendicants,..." etc.<sup>1</sup> One may not question Sarkar's good taste in calling Muslim theologians, learned men, scions of good families and others who received state-grants and rent-free lands, "loafers", "pretended saints," "hangers-on" etc., but one can ask: if Shāista Khān had reversed his earlier policy and allowed his subordinates to raise money "in the old wicked ways", why should he have continued to enjoy undiminished popularity with the masses for his benevolence; again, if he was "covetous" and "oppressive", why should he have continued to indulge in "indiscriminate charity"? The fact is that Sarkar in his absorbing prejudice does not pause to see the inherent contradictions in his treatment of Shāista Khān.

#### IV. CONQUEST OF CHITTAGONG

The conquest, or rather reconquest of Chittagong, was long overdue. The territory had been brought within the fold of the Bengal sultanat by 'Alā'-al-Dīn Husain Shāh.<sup>2</sup> During the Mughal-Afghan contest for supremacy it was captured by the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.387.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp.200-203.

Arakanese king. Since then it continued to be a base for piratical incursions into lower Bengal by the *Maghs* (Arakanese) and the *Feringis* (Portuguese). The extension of the Mughal sway upto the Noakhali district during Jahāngīr's reign and the subjugation of the Portuguese at Hugli during Shāh Jahān's reign<sup>1</sup> prepared the ground for a final assault on the pirates' den at Chittagong. It was Mīr Jumla's intention to undertake the expedition after his return from the Assam campaign, but death cut short his plan. Aurangzeb specifically commissioned Shāista Khān to accomplish the task.

The two main objects of the undertaking, as Bernier records, were the "deliverance of *Bengale* from the cruel and incessant devastations of these barbarians [Magh and Portuguese pirates]" and punishment of the Arakanese king "for his cruelty to Sultan *Sujah* and his family, *Aureng-zebe* having determined to avenge the murder of those illustrious personages."<sup>2</sup> Some account of the Magh-Feringi depredations in lower Bengal has been given in chapter XIV above. Even after the capture of Hugli the Feringi pirates lived at Chittagong "under the protection of the *remindar* [king] of Arracan, giving half their booty from Bengal to him."<sup>3</sup> "To comprehend the nature of the expedition meditated by *Chahhestkan* [Shāista Khān], and to form a correct idea of the occurrences in the Gulf of *Bengale*," writes Bernier who visited Bengal including Dacca in 1666, (i.e. the very year Shāista Khān conquered Chittagong) "it should be mentioned that the King of *Rakan* [Arakan] or *Mog*, has harboured during many years several *Portuguese* settlers, a great number of Christian slaves, or half-caste *Portuguese*, and other *Franks* collected from various parts of the world. That kingdom was the place of retreat for fugitives from *Goa*, *Ceylon*, *Cochin*, *Malacca*, and other settlements in the *Indies*, held formerly by the *Portuguese*; and no persons were better received than those who had deserted their monasteries, married two or three wives, or committed other great crimes. These people were Christians only in name; the lives

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp. 308, 358-364.

<sup>2</sup> *Bernier*, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> Tālish's "Continuation", p. 116 b.

led by them were most detestable, massacring or poisoning one another without compunction or remorse, and sometimes assassinating even their priests, who, to confess the truth, were too often no better than their murderers."<sup>1</sup> The king of Arakan, further writes Bernier, "kept these foreigners, as a species of advanced guard", making them grants of land. "They scoured the neighbouring seas in light galleys, called *galleasses*, entered the numerous arms and branches of the *Ganges*, ravaged the islands of *Lower Bengale*, and often penetrating forty or fifty leagues up the country, surprised and carried away the entire population of villages on market days, and at times when the inhabitants were assembled for the celebration of a marriage, or some other festival. The marauders made slaves of their unhappy captives, and burnt whatever could not be removed. It is owing to these repeated depredations that we see so many fine islands at the mouth of the *Ganges*, formerly thickly populated, now entirely deserted by human beings, and become the desolate lairs of tigers and other wild beasts."<sup>2</sup> The Feringi (Portuguese) pirates treated their slaves most cruelly. "It was usual to see young persons, who had saved themselves by timely flight, endeavouring today to redeem the parent who had been made captive yesterday. Those who were not disabled by age the pirates either kept in their service, training them up to the love of robbery and practice of assassination, or sold to the *Portuguese* of *Goa*, *Ceylon*, *Santhome*, and other places. Even the *Portuguese* of *Ogouli* [*Hugli*], in *Bengale*, purchased without scruple these wretched captives,<sup>3</sup> and the horrid traffic was transacted in the vicinity of the island of *Gales* near *Cape das Palmas* [on the *Orissa* coast]. The pirates, by a mutual understanding, waited for the arrival of the *Portuguese* [ships], who bought whole cargoes at a cheap rate; and it is lamentable to reflect that other Europeans, since the decline of the *Portuguese* power, have pursued the same flagitious commerce with these pirates, who boast, the infamous scoundrels, that they make more Christians in a twelve month than all

<sup>1</sup> *Bernier*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> The traffic at *Hugli* was stopped after its capture by the *Mughals*.

the missionaries of the *Indies* do in ten years.”<sup>1</sup> Even early in 1664 when Shāista Khān had been busy at Rajmahal in dealing with Kuch Bihar the pirates advanced as far as Bagadia near Dacca. Munawwar Khān, the *sardār-i-sairāb* (cruising admiral) of the Bengal fleet, with the assistance of reinforcements sent by ‘Aqīdat Khān, Shāista Khān’s son and deputy governor at Dacca, succeeded with difficulty in repulsing the attack and in driving away the pirates.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately on his arrival at Dacca, therefore, Shāista Khān began preparations for the conquest of Chittagong. At first he took steps to guard and strengthen the southern frontier outposts. He appointed an Afghan named Sa’īd “with 500 rocketeers and musketeers” to the Noakhali outpost,<sup>3</sup> and transferred Muḥammad Sharīf, *faujdar* of Hugli, to Sangramgarh, near modern Chandpur, to guard the post there with “500 rocketeers, 1,000 infantry and 20 guns.”<sup>4</sup> He was to be assisted by Abū al-Ḥasan who was posted at Śīripur (near Chandpur) “with 200 ships”, and Muḥammad Beg Abakash, who was posted with 100 ships at Dhapa.<sup>5</sup> All these officers were specially experienced and tried, Abū al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad Beg Abakash having proved their valour and skill during Mīr Jumla’s Assam expedition. “A wide high road (*āl*) was built from Dhapa to Sangramgar, so that even in the monsoons horse and foot could proceed on land from Sangramgar to Dacca, a distance of 18 *Kos*.”<sup>6</sup>

At the same time Shāista Khān ordered for the building of a

<sup>1</sup> *Beriner*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Tālīsh’s “Continuation”, p. 122 a, b.

<sup>3</sup> *A.N.*, p. 943.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; also Tālīsh’s “Continuation”, p. 140 a.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* The *‘Ālamgirnāmah* says: “From Śīripur to ‘Ālamgirnagar covering a distance of twenty-one *Kroh*, an embanked road so that it might not be flooded during the rains was also constructed under the Nawab’s order, for military purposes.” (*A.N.*, p. 943, Abdus Salam’s translation in *Riyāḍ*, p. 229 n.). The ‘Ālamgirnagar mentioned here is obviously a mistake for Jahāngirnagar (Dacca). The distance between the latter place and Śīripur is stated by the *A.N.* to be 21 *Kroh* (*Kos*); while the distance between Dacca and Sangramgar is stated by the “Continuation” to be 18 *Kos*. Therefore the distance between Sangramgar and Śīripur must have been 3 *Kos* or about 6 miles. It is also to be noted that the “Continuation” speaks of the construction of the road “from Dhapa to Sangramgar”, which seems to be correct, for Mīr Jumla had previously constructed a road upto Khizirpur (Narayanganj) via Fatullah. The road constructed by Shāista Khān was in all likelihood a continuation of that road, and not a new road from Dacca to Śīripur as the *‘Ālamgirnāmah* suggests.

strong fleet. The fleet at Mīr Jumla's death was not really "utterly ruined", as Tālīsh suggests obviously to eulogize and emphasize Shāista Khān's accomplishment in this respect. Tālīsh's own earlier account of Mīr Jumla's expedition to Assam shows that the fleet returned almost intact, and the author's account of the conquest of Chittagong also shows that the same officials of the fleet who were under Mīr Jumla, such as Munawwar Khān, Ibn-i-Husain, Abū al-Hasan, Muḥammad Beg Abakash, Muḥammad Muqīm, Farhad Khān, Sarandāz Khān, Mīr Murtaḍa, etc., played conspicuous roles in the conquest of Chittagong as well. The fact was that the fleet as it existed was not suitable for a naval expedition against Chittagong, different types of vessels being necessary for sailing across the seas. Some disorganization of the fleet was indeed there, as Tālīsh notes, on account of the "extortion and violence" of the Hindu clerks which "ruined the *pargana*hs assigned for maintaining the *nawwara*" and which impoverished many naval officers and workmen.<sup>1</sup> However, Shāista Khān "devoted all his energy to the rebuilding of the *flotilla*." Hakīm Muḥammad Husain, "an old, able, learned, trustworthy, and virtuous servant of the Nawwāb" was appointed head of the ship-building department, while the supervision of the fleet was entrusted to "Muḥammad Muqīm, an expert, clever, and hard officer serving in Bengal, whom Mīr Jumla had left at Dacca in supervision of the *nawwara* at the time of the Assam expedition."<sup>2</sup> Kishor Das, "an Imperial officer, a well-informed and experienced clerk", was placed in charge of "the *pargana*hs of the *nawwara*, and the stipend of the jagirs assigned to the [naval] officers and men."<sup>3</sup> Bailiffs were sent with warrants to every *mauza* of the province to bring timbers and

<sup>1</sup> Tālīsh's "Continuation", p. 113 a. Elsewhere, in connection with Shāista Khan's remission of customs etc., Tālīsh writes: "I strongly hope that, just as the peasants and the merchants have been released from oppression and innovations [in taxation], so someone would fully and freely report to the Emperor the distress among the soldiery and the fact of their being harassed and crushed by the oppression of the thievish clerks, and thereby release the soldiers from the tyranny of these godless men. The army is treated by the Hindu clerks, and drowsy writers as more degraded than a fire-worshipping slave and more unclean than the dog of a Jew." (*Ibid.*, pp. 129 b. and 130 a.). In this connection Tālīsh refers particularly to the clerks' fraudulent "curtailing the stipends of the soldiery" and other harassment in respect of the disbursement of pay and allowances.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137 b.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138 a.

shipwrights to Dacca. It was further ordered that at the ports of Hugli, Balasore, Murang, Chilmari, Jessore and Karibari "as many boats should be built as possible" and sent to Dacca.<sup>1</sup> Thus within a short time nearly 300 ships were built and equipped with the necessary materials for the expedition.

It was necessary first to secure the island of Sondip, situated at the mouth of the Ganges, as a base for the expedition. Sondip was at the time under the control of Dilawar who had earlier run away from the Mughal navy and had then established himself as the master of the island. Shāista Khān sent Abū al-Ḥasan with a fleet to capture the island from Dilawar. The latter was defeated in an engagement; but soon an Arakanese fleet came to his assistance. Abū al-Ḥasan faced this Arakanese fleet which withdrew. He could not, however, pursue it and retired to Noakhali waiting for reinforcement.<sup>2</sup> Shāista Khān now sent Ibn-i-Husain, superintendent of the *nawwāra*, with a fleet "consisting of 1,500 gunners and 400 cavalry", and accompanied by Jamāl Khān, Sarandāz Khān, Qaramal Khān and Muḥammad Beg Abakash, to reinforce Abū al-Ḥasan. With this reinforcement Ibn-i-Husain moved upto Noakhali and halted there with Muḥammad Beg in order to block the advance of the Arakanese fleet. With the others Abū al-Ḥasan attacked Sondip, defeated and captured Dilawar together with his son and other followers and sent them prisoners to Jahāngīrnagar. Sondip was thus conquered on 12 November 1665. Shāista Khān appointed 'Abd al-Karīm, brother of Rashīd Khān, *thānahdār* of Sondip with 200 cavalry and 1000 infantry.<sup>3</sup>

With Sondip captured Shāista Khān now pushed forward with his final preparations. About this time he took two more important steps. He wrote through a Dutch captain in Bengal to the Dutch authorities at Batavia (Jakarta) seeking their naval help in the projected expedition against Chittagong.<sup>4</sup> The Dutch governor at Batavia responded to the request with a view to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116 a.

<sup>2</sup> *A.N.*, pp.943-44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.944.

<sup>4</sup> Tālish's "Continuation", p.116 b.

gaining important commercial advantages and to weaken the Portuguese power; and sent two ships to Bengal.<sup>1</sup> This help was however found unnecessary and the Nawwāb sent them back with thanks. In fact he could dispense with the Dutch help because of his success in his other attempt, that of persuading the 'Feringis' of Chittagong to abandon the Arakanese king and to come over to the Mughal side. There were Portuguese trading stations at Laricol (about 13 miles west of Chandpur), Hugli, and Tamluk (in Midnapur district). Shāista Khān got in touch with the "Feringis" of Chittagong through their countrymen at these places. He sent Shaikh Diyā' al-Dīn, one of his trusted officers, as *dāroga* of the port of Laricol where Feringi merchants were engaged in the salt trade, and "ordered the Shaikh to manage that these Feringis should write to their brethren, the pirates of Chatgaon, offering assurances and hopes of Imperial favours and rewards, and thus make them come and enter the Mughal service."<sup>2</sup> Diyā' al-Dīn was also asked to send conciliatory letters of his own to the Feringis of Chittagong. Shāista Khān also asked the Portuguese captains at Hugli and Tamluk to write similar letters to Chittagong.<sup>3</sup> These were done and they had their desired effect firstly because, as mentioned earlier, the relations between the Feringis at Chittagong and the Arakanese ruler had been deteriorating since Mātak Rāi, brother of the former Arakanese ruler, had taken political asylum at Dacca.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, and according to Bernier, Shāista Khān is stated to have given the Feringis to understand that Aurangzeb was "fixed in the resolution of chastising the king of Rakan, and a Dutch fleet, too powerful to be resisted", was near at hand, and that therefore for the safety of themselves and their families they should come over to Bengal, adding that in Bengal they should have as much land allotted to them as they thought necessary and their pay would be double that which they received at Chittagong.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, and

<sup>1</sup> Bernier, p.181; *E.F.I.*, 1661-1664, pp.402-403. For the English attitude to Shāista Khān's Chittagong expedition see below, p.464.

<sup>2</sup> Tālish's "Continuation", p.116 b.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151 b.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, pp.368-369.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.180-181.

again according to Bernier, the "pirates about this time had assassinated one of the king of Rakan's principal officers, and it is not known whether they were more struck with terror by the punishment awaiting them for that crime, or moved by the promises and threats contained in *Chahhest's* [Shāista Khān's communication".<sup>1</sup> Fourthly, and according to both Tālish and the *Ālamgīrnāmah*, the immediate cause of the Feringis' decision was the action of the Arakanese king who, on coming to know about Shāista Khān's communications and of the Mughal conquest of Sondip ordered the governor of Chittagong to deport the Feringis from that place to the interior of Arakan with a view either to keeping them under surveillance or to massacring them.<sup>2</sup> Getting scent of this plan of the Arakanese ruler the Feringis, on 19 December 1665, set fire to a number of the Arakanese ships at Chittagong and on 40 to 50 *jalba* boats came in a body over to the Mughals at Noakhali.<sup>3</sup> Farhad Khān, the commandant of the Bhulua outpost, accorded them a warm welcome, kept some of them with him and sent the rest along with their leaders to Shāista Khān at Jahāngīrnagar (Dacca). The latter treated them generously.<sup>4</sup>

Shāista Khān "regarded the coming over of the Feringis as the commencement of the victory",<sup>5</sup> which it really was. According to the suggestion of Captain Moor, "the Feringi leader", an immediate expedition was decided on. It was entrusted to Buzurg Ummed Khān, the Nawwāb's son who, accompanied by a large force and important officers like Ikhtisāṣ Khān, Sarandāz Khān, Mīr Murtaḍā, Qarawāl Khān and others started from Dacca on 24 December 1665.<sup>6</sup> Mīr Murtaḍā, the superintendent of the artillery and Farhad Khān, the *thānahdār* of Bhulua, were to proceed with a strong contingent as the van on land clearing the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> Tālish's "Continuation", pp. 151 b and 152 a; *A.N.*, p. 947.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Also Bernier, p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> *A.N.*, p. 947. Many of the Feringis were settled at a place about 12 miles below Dacca which was called *Feringi Bazar* and where some of their descendants were still seen in the early 19th century. (Stewart, *History of Bengal*, 1812, p. 299). There is even today an area in modern Chittagong town which is called *Feringi Bazar*.

<sup>5</sup> "Continuation", p. 157 a.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p., 158 a. The *Ālamgīrnāmah* (p. 948) gives the date 25 December.



jungles and preparing the way for the advance of the main forces under Buzurg Ummed Khān and the others; while the fleet, composed of the "Imperial Nawwāra" under Ibn-i-Ḥusain and Muḥammad Beg Abakash, the "zamindars' flotilla" under Munawwar Khān, and the Feringi fleet commanded by Captain Moor, was to proceed by river and sea keeping close touch with the van of the land forces. The supreme command of the fleet was given to Ibn-i-Ḥusain.<sup>1</sup> Shāista Khān stayed behind to look after the overall conduct of the campaign and to ensure the supply of provisions. "If the siege were protracted he would quickly go and join his son". Further, "Kamāl, a former Arakanese king's son, who in Shāh Jahān's reign had fled to Dacca", was also ordered to accompany the van of the land forces "with a band of the Maghs who lived at Dacca."<sup>2</sup>

Farhad Khān and Mīr Murtadā, "with the force of pioneers, wood-cutters, and some infantry" started from Noakhali on 12 January 1666 (16 Rajab 1075 H) and crossed the Feni river on 14 January (18 Rajab). The fleet also started from Noakhali at the same time. Buzurg Ummed Khān crossed the Feni river on 17 January. On 21 January the advance land-force and the fleet reached the Kumira creek, while Buzurg Ummed Khān, "who was hastening clearing the jungle" arrived with the main army within three *kos* of the place.<sup>3</sup> Near Kumira the first naval encounter with the Arakanese fleet took place on 23 January 1666 (27 Rajab 1075). "Ten *ghurābs* and 45 *jalbās* of the enemy came in sight", writes Tālīsh, "and began to discharge their guns. Captain Moor and the Feringis, who led the van, boldly steered their ships up to the enemy, Ibn Ḥusain coming behind them. The enemy could not resist the onset; the men on the *ghurābs* jumped overboard, and the *jalbās* took to flight".<sup>4</sup> Ibn-i-Ḥusain with his swift ship gave a chase and captured all the ten *ghurābs* and three

<sup>1</sup> The "Imperial fleet", excluding the zamindar's flotilla and the Feringi fleet, consisted of 288 ships, made up of 21 *Ghurab*, 3 *Salb*, 157 *Kusā*, 96 *Jalbā*, 2 *Bāchārī*, 6 *Paranda* and 3 others. *Cont.*, p. 159 a.

<sup>2</sup> *A.N.*, p. 948. Probably Mātak Rāi (*supra*, pp. 368-369) embraced Islam and took the name of 'Kamāl'; for no other Arakanese prince is known to have fled to Dacca with his followers.

<sup>3</sup> *A.N.*, p. 949; *Cont.*, p. 161 b. The *Ālamgirnāmāh* calls the place "Dumria", while Tālīsh calls it "Khamaria".

<sup>4</sup> *Cont.*, p. 168 a.

*jalbās*.<sup>1</sup> Soon, however, the fleeing Arakanese *jalbās* were joined by their big ships which were waiting behind. Ibn-i-Husain advanced with his light ships, kept the enemy engaged by incessant gun-firing and sent a man to hurry up the big ships (*salbs*) which arrived at the time of the evening prayer. "From that time to dawn, there was cannonade between the two sides." On the following morning (24 January, 28 Rajab) a second naval battle followed in which the Arakanese fleet, being defeated, fled and entered the Karnafuli river at about 3 p.m. The Muslim fleet pursued the enemy, came to the Karnafuli and seized its mouth.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime Buzurg Ummed Khān, being informed of the developments, directed Farhad Khān and Mīr Murtaḍā to advance in all haste to join hands with the *nawwāra*. Farhad Khān and Mīr Murtaḍā with their forces reached the bank of the Karnafuli river on the same day (24 January).<sup>3</sup> Ibn-i-Husain now entered the Karnafuli river and dashed upon the Arakanese ships. "Captain Moor and other Feringi pirates, the Nawwāb's officers such as Muhammad Beg Abakāsh and Munawwar Khān zemindar, came swiftly from different sides". After a great fight the Arakanese were decisively defeated. Many of them were slain, some escaped by abandoning the ships and the rest surrendered. Many of their ships were sunk "by the fire or ramming of the Mughal fleet," and 135 ships were captured.<sup>4</sup>

The naval battle on the Karnafuli on 24 January proved decisive. The Arakanese now began to abandon the Chittagong fort. Its governor, "who was the son of the Arracan king's uncle", surrendered on 26 January and "was taken prisoner with one son and some other relatives, and nearly 350 men of the tribe". 1,026 guns "made of bronze and iron" together with a large amount of other war materials and 2 or 3 elephants were also captured. "Large numbers of the peasants of Bengal who had been carried off and kept prisoners here, were now released from the Magh

<sup>1</sup> A.N. p.950.

<sup>2</sup> Cont., pp.169 b, 170 a.

<sup>3</sup> A.N., p.950.

<sup>4</sup> Cont., pp.170 b and 171 a; A.N., p.951. The *Ālamgirnāmah* mentions (p.953) 132 ships having been captured. The different types of ships captured are stated by Tālish as *Khālu* 2, *Ghurāb* 9, *Jāngi* 22, *Kosā* 12, *Jalbā* 67 (68?) *Bālām* 22.

oppression and returned to their homes".<sup>1</sup> The Maghs in the fort on the other side of the river also fled and it fell into the Muslims' hands. The peasantry on that side of the river, "who were mostly Muslims kidnapped from Bengal", attacked and killed many of the fleeing Maghs including one of their leaders, and captured two of their elephants which were brought to Ibn-i-Husain.<sup>2</sup> Buzurg Ummid Khān entered the Chittagong fort on 27 January and by a proclamation reassured the people of safety of their life and property.<sup>3</sup> Next he brought the whole of northern Chittagong under effective control and appointed Miāna Khān as *thānahdār* to the north of Chittagong and Tāj Miyāna as *thānahdār* to guard the roads from Chittagong to the bank of the Feni river.<sup>4</sup> An expedition to capture southern Chittagong was also sent under Mīr Murtaḍā who, "after traversing difficult roads, dense jungles, and terrible rivers" reached Rāmu, near modern Cox's Bazar, after 12 days' march and wrested it from the Arakanese king's brother, Rāwli, who had been holding the fort. "Many Muslim ryots of Bengal, who had been kept as captives here, were liberated and returned home."<sup>5</sup>

Thus was the "pirates' nest" broken and the Muslim sway reestablished over the area. The whole expedition starting from Dacca till the capture of the Chittagong fort took exactly one month and 2 days, and calculating from the date of start from Noakhali it took exactly 2 weeks. The actual fightings, confined to 2 naval battles on the sea and one in the Karnafuli river, took place on two days only, on 23 and 24 January 1666. Clearly the Arakanese, after the desertion of the "Feringi pirates", were no match for the Mughals. The Feringis did indeed play a conspicuous role in the naval battles, but Ibn-i-Husain and Munawwar Khān exhibited no less skill and valour, and the success of the expedition was due mainly to the close cooperation between the land forces and the fleet.

The news of the victory reached Shāista Khān on 29 January

<sup>1</sup> A.N., p.953 (J.N. Sarkar's translation of the passage).

<sup>2</sup> Cont., p.172 b.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.175 b.

<sup>4</sup> A.N., p.953.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.955.

1666. After thanking Allah and distributing alms to the poor, he "began to give to all the army liberal rewards consisting of robes, horses and elephants... Wealth beyond measure was given to the Feringi pirates and one month's pay as bounty to his own officers and the crew of the *nawwāra*."<sup>1</sup> The same day the Nawwāb sent a despatch on the victory to the emperor Aurangzeb. The latter received the news at the end of Sha'bān (February 1666). He ordered Chittagong to be named Islāmābād, which name it still bears, and conferred gifts on Shāista Khān, raised his son Buzurg Ummad Khān, Farhad Khān, and Munawwar Khān to the rank of *Hāzār-o-Pānsadī* (Thousand and five hundred), and conferred on Mīr Murtaḍā the title of *Mujāhid Khān* and on Ibn-i-Ḥusain the title of *Muzaffar Khān*.<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Beg Abakāsh also was promoted.

#### V. CHARACTER AND ESTIMATE

Shāista Khān was the greatest of the Mughal viceroys in Bengal. Excepting an interval of little more than a year he governed the province for a quarter of a century with efficiency, honesty, justice, generosity and paternal care for the welfare of the people. With all his power and greatness he "was meek and humble, courteous and affable, just and liberal, brave, noble and enlightened."<sup>3</sup> He strictly conformed to the principles of Islam in his private and public life, and was acknowledgedly the most honest, the most generous and the most intelligent person in the service of the Mughal empire. Tavernier describes him as "the cleverest man" in all Aurangzeb's domains.<sup>4</sup> The emperor held him in high esteem and "lavished on him high privileges and semi-regal honours."<sup>5</sup> Shāista Khān possessed a very good health and retained his physical and mental vigour and energy almost till the end of his life.<sup>6</sup> He died at the ripe age of 93, six years after his

<sup>1</sup> *Cont.*, p.172 b.

<sup>2</sup> *A.N.*, p.956. According to Tālish, the title given to Ibn-i-Ḥusain was *Manṣūr Khān* (*Cont.*, p.173 b).

<sup>3</sup> A. Salam in *Riyād*, p.227, n. 1.; also J.C. Marshman, *History of India*, Vol.I., p.209.

<sup>4</sup> *Tav.*, Vol.I., 165.

<sup>5</sup> A. Salam, *op.cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Jadunath Sarkar's description (*H.B.* II, p.373) of Shāista Khān as "a tired old man" when he came to Bengal in 1664, and yet given to a life of "ease and pleasure amidst his numerous harem" so =

retirement from Bengal.

Shāista Khān's most distinguishing achievement was the conquest of Chittagong and the establishment of peace and security of life and property in lower Bengal from the depredations of the Magh-Feringi pirates. "As a viceroy of a Mughal province", aptly writes Bradley-Birt, "he stands out beyond his contemporaries. Above all things, he gave a distracted country the peace and quietness it so much needed. Not since the Mussulman first came to Bengal had the province enjoyed so long a rest and the blessings of peace in those days conferred a distinction upon the giver that later days cannot wholly appreciate."<sup>1</sup> Equally notable were his revenue reforms which gave an impetus to agriculture, while his encouragement to trade and commerce led to an unprecedented economic prosperity in the country characterized by increasing commercial activities of both local and foreign merchants. All the necessities of life including rice, the staple food of the land, were proverbially cheap during his time so much so that even long after his departure people wishfully looked back to his time. Stewart, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century refers to this fact and states: "His memory is to this day spoken of with the highest respect in that province. It is related that during his government grain was so cheap that rice was sold at the rate of 740 lbs. (i.e. eight munds) weight for the rupee...."<sup>2</sup> Coming after a famine which raged Dacca and its neighbourhood towards the closing days of Mīr Jumla's viceroyalty, this was no mean achievement on Shāista Khān's part; and he was deservedly conscious of this, so that while leaving the province for the last time he caused an inscription to be engraved on the western gate of Jahāngīrnagar (Dacca) saying: "Let him only open this gate that can show the selling rate of rice as cheap as this."<sup>3</sup> "From this time onward till the regime of Nawab Shujauddin Muhammad Khan," writes the *Riyāḍ* "this gate remained closed. In the period of the viceroyalty of Nawab

= much so that he had a son born to him "in the 82nd year of his age", is a gross distortion of the facts gleaned from contemporary sources. It is also somewhat self-contradictory on Sarkar's part.

<sup>1</sup> F.B. Bradley-Birt. *The Romance of an Eastern Capital*, London, 1906, p.26.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.353.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyāḍ*, p.228.

related that during his

grain was so cheap that rice

Sarafaraz Khan, the gate was again opened..”<sup>1</sup>

In his policy towards traders and merchants, specially towards the foreign merchants, Shāista Khān was just, liberal and impartial, keeping in view the welfare and interests of the people and the country. He has of course been much maligned and abused by the English factors, and this has led some modern writers to call him “oppressive”, “covetous”, etc. The question has been discussed elsewhere in some detail from which it will be seen that he was nothing of the sort. Even a less biased English historian notes: “Shāista Khān is charged by the factors of the company with insatiable rapacity, [yet] they did not deny that he fostered their commerce and obtained many favours for them from Delhi.”<sup>2</sup>

Far from being “covetous” and “oppressive”, Shāista Khān was in reality charitable and generous to an uncommon degree. He administered even-handed justice to all and appointed the *qādis* (judges) strictly on merit and integrity of character. As noted above, he resettled many meritorious and deserving persons in their rent-free lands and also granted such lands to many new applicants. As Stewart observes: “He granted villages and plots of land, free of revenue to the widows of respectable men, to persons of good birth and the indigent...”<sup>3</sup> Manucci, the contemporary European observer, informs us that “Shaista Khan was a man of ripe judgment, very wealthy and powerful and of good reputation, for he was very charitable, distributing every year in alms 50 thousand rupees. For this purpose, in each of the principal cities of the empire, he employed officials who looked after the daily gifts of food and clothes to the most necessitous of the poor and succoured the widows and the orphans.”<sup>4</sup>

Shāista Khān was also a great builder. He established many mosques with *madrāsas*, rest houses, bridges and roads.<sup>5</sup> He erected many notable public buildings at Dacca of which the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Jadunath Sarkar's attempt to belittle Shāista Khan's fame in this regard has been discussed before (See *supra*, pp. 425, 432-433.)

<sup>2</sup> Marshman, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 222. See also *supra*, pp. 428-429.

<sup>4</sup> Manucci, Vol. II., p. 322.

<sup>5</sup> *M.A.*, p. 368.

Small Kātrā, the Lalbagh Palace and some mosques still exist in a fair state of preservation. "His rule was the period of Dacca's greatest prosperity," writes Bradley-Birt. "Noble buildings designed and executed with all the skill of Mussalman art, rose to beautify the city. No other viceroy or governor has so impressed his memory upon Dacca. It is truly the city of Shaista Khān."<sup>1</sup>

Before leaving the topic it is necessary to note that by uncritically accepting the English factors' unfounded allegations about Shāista Khān's "covetousness" and "extortions", and then mingling them with the undoubted fact of his fame and generosity, Jadunath Sarkar has depicted a rather misleading and self-contradictory picture about the Nawwāb's character. Thus at an early stage of his discussion Sarkar accepts the "European testimony" of Shāista Khān's alleged "covetousness" and "extortions" as "unassailable", and then referring to a few instances of Shāista Khān's remittances and presents to Aurangzeb, castigates the Nawwāb by saying that he maintained such "extravagance" by "squeezing the people" and by letting his subordinates freely "to raise money for him by every means that they could think of;..."<sup>2</sup> And then, at a later stage, Sarkar pressed Shāista Khān's proverbial fame and generosity also into an argument for proving what was called "his extravagance and reckless expenditure". "In fact Shāista Khān's fame in Bengal," writes Sarkar, "was due to the easy Oriental way of gaining popularity with the vulgar—by living in a regal style of pomp and prodigality, supporting a vast parasite class of useless servants and hangers-on, and practising indiscriminate charity to an army of pretended saints and theologians, loafers calling themselves religious mendicants, and decayed scions of good families who had learnt no trade or honest means of livelihood."<sup>3</sup> Sarkar further states that "Shāista Khān's profusion of expenditure" upset the Bengal budget. "At the end of his first term in 1678 the provincial diwan reported to the Emperor that this subahadar had drawn and spent one Kror and

<sup>1</sup> Bradley-Birt, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>2</sup> *H.B.*, II., p. 374. Following Sarkar closely A. C. Roy (*op. cit.*, p. 287) even calls Shāista Khān both "extravagant" and "profligate".

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

thirty-two lakhs of rupees in excess of his *tankha* grant. Again, during his second term (1683), it was reported that he had overspent 52 lakhs..."<sup>1</sup>

One may not question the propriety of calling the recipients of rent-free lands and other charitable grants of the time as "loafers", pretended theologians, etc., but one would do well to note the inherent contradictions in Sarkar's approach. The simple fact is that a person cannot at the same time be both generous and oppressive, covetous and charitable. Yet, that is precisely what Sarkar would have his readers believe. The trustworthiness of the English factors' allegations against Shāista Khān, and his relation with the foreign traders have been discussed elsewhere. Suffice it to note here that there is no instance in contemporary sources of Shāista Khān's having extorted money from the foreign traders under any pretext. The total of all the remittances to Aurangzeb cited by Sarkar, including even those that Shāista Khān merely promised to make, do not exceed 72 lakhs in all.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.386, n. 2, quoting *M.A.*, pp.170, 234.

<sup>2</sup> The remittances cited are: (a) 1678, on return to Delhi from his first term of office, "30 lakhs in cash besides 4 lakhs worth of jewels", as present to the emperor; (b) 1680.



## CHAPTER XX

### SHĀISTA KHĀN AND THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY'S TRADE IN BENGAL<sup>1</sup>

#### I. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

With the exception of the conquest of Chittagong early in his rule and the conflict with the English traders towards the end, the viceroyalty of Shāista Khān (1664-1677, 1679-1688 A.C.) witnessed an unbroken peace and unprecedented commercial activities, both internal and external. During his time Bengal attained a degree of prosperity which has ever since become proverbial. Yet, unfortunately, certain erroneous impressions have been made current by some writers about his commercial policy, specially with regard to his relations with the foreign traders. It is necessary to point out at the outset that these impressions have been based on the accusations of the English traders. The Dutch and other foreign traders, who had a far larger trade in Bengal at that time and who, by the admissions of the English traders themselves, paid customs duties regularly, did not make such allegations of the Nawwāb's "exactions" and "oppression" and with whom he had no conflict. It was the English who from the very beginning of their trade in Bengal attempted to avoid the payment of custom duty and, as noted in a previous chapter, even contemplated the use of force during Mīr Jumla's viceroyalty.<sup>2</sup> The same attitude of having recourse to force was taken up by them early in Shāista Khān's time and, towards the end of his viceroyalty the first Anglo-Mughal war did in fact take place. For this reason, and also because the English ultimately established their political domination in Bengal a little more than half a century after the war with Shāista Khān, his relationship with them has been noted here in some detail.

Charles Stewart, writing at the beginning of the last century, represented Shāista Khān as the oppressor of the foreign traders, and concluded that his "oppressions" ultimately led the English

<sup>1</sup> The present Chapter is based on two of my articles on Shaista Khan's relation with the English published in *J. A. S. P.*, 1965, Part II, pp. 85-119, and *J. E. P. H. A.*, March, 1968, pp. 14-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 393-395.

East India Company to declare war upon the Mughals.<sup>1</sup> This theme was further developed by subsequent English writers like C.R. Wilson,<sup>2</sup> and W.W. Hunter,<sup>3</sup> both writing towards the end of the nineteenth century. About that time, and also during the first quarter of the twentieth century, however, a number of the more important of the company's early documents were published. Of these, the diaries of William Hedges, the Company's Agent in Bengal in 1682-1684, published in 1887-89,<sup>4</sup> and those of Streynsham Master, another of the Company's Agents who visited Bengal in 1676, published in 1911,<sup>5</sup> deserve special mention. Of greater importance, however, were the Company's seventeenth century Indian factory records, edited and summarized by William Foster, and published between 1909 and 1927.<sup>6</sup> Another series of documents, preserved in Bengal and Madras, were collected by G.W. Forrest, who was officer in charge of the records of the Government of India about the year 1891. These documents were published in three volumes in 1928.<sup>7</sup>

A careful perusal of these published records alone would have inevitably led to a revised estimate about Shāista Khān's relations with the East India Company. In fact, writing in 1906 F.B. Bradley-Birt indicated a departure from the pattern set by Stewart and suggested a more favourable view of Shāista Khān's attitude towards the East India Company,<sup>8</sup> although Bradley-Birt himself concluded that the Company was forced to take up arms to protect their interests because of the inefficiency, if not the oppression, of the Nawwāb's government.<sup>9</sup> The suggestion of Bradley-Birt was not taken up by subsequent writers. Writing in

<sup>1</sup> Stewart, *History of Bengal*, 1903 impression, pp.347-48, 351-53. The book was first published in 1813.

<sup>2</sup> C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal, being the Bengal Public Consultations for the first half of the eighteenth century*, Calcutta, 1895.

<sup>3</sup> W.W. Hunter, *A History of British India*, London, 1899-1900, Vol. II, pp.237-54.

<sup>4</sup> Yule, H. (ed.): *The Diary of William Hedges*, 3 vols, London, 1887-89.

<sup>5</sup> Temple, R.C. (ed.): *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, 2 vols. London, 1911.

<sup>6</sup> *English Factories in India, 1618-1669*, 13 vols. Oxford, 1906-27. A new series of the same materials, covering the period between 1670 and 1684, has been edited by Charles Fawcett and has been published from 1936-1955.

<sup>7</sup> *Bengal and Madras Papers*, 3 vols. Imperial Record Dept., Calcutta, 1928.

<sup>8</sup> Bradley-Birt: *The Romance of an Eastern Capital*, London, 1906, pp.147-48.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.162-66.

1948 the late Sir Jadunath Sarkar reverted to Stewart's theory and painted even a darker picture of Shāista Khān's commercial policy. After dwelling at some length upon the Nawwāb's alleged "greed" and "caprice" Sarkar observed:

"Such an extravagance could be maintained only by squeezing the people. His subordinates were left free to raise money for him by every means that they could think of; merchandize were stopped at every outpost and ferry and custom duty charged over and over again in disregard of official permits; cesses (*abwābs*) abolished by imperial decree, continued to be realised in practice. In addition the Nawab practised a monopoly of the sale of salt, betelnut, and some other prime necessities of life. Thus by grinding the masses, he amassed a vast treasure, besides building costly edifices at Dacca, the memory of which still lingers. Indeed, Bengal's only attraction for him was the ease of administering such a soft population and the gold to be had for the picking."<sup>1</sup>

In tune with Stewart's theory Sarkar further writes that the exactions and oppressions of the Nawwāb exhausted the patience of the English traders who at last declared war against the Mughals and also made "the foundation and fortification of Calcutta before the 17th century was over."<sup>2</sup>

Sarkar thus makes three specific allegations against the Nawwāb: (i) stopping of the merchandize at every outpost and ferry and charging the custom duty over and over again in disregard of official permits; (ii) the realization of *abwābs* abolished by imperial decree and (iii) holding the monopoly of salt, betel-nut and some other prime necessities of life. These charges are ill-founded and are obviously self-contradictory. As to the first, who issued the official permits in contravention of which custom duty was allegedly charged over and over again? If Shāista Khān or his officers stopped the merchandize for realizing the custom duty, surely they themselves did not issue the alleged permits; but besides them there was none else in Bengal capable of or entitled to issue official permits. Never was a custom duty "charged over and over again". Similarly the second charge is also baseless. No *abwāb* abolished by imperial decree was reimposed, and as will be seen presently no imperial decree secured to the Company any right in Bengal before 1680. The third charge of the

<sup>1</sup> Jadu-Nath Sarkar, (ed.): *H.B. Vol. II.*, Second Impression, Dacca, 1972, p.374.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.384.

Nawwāb's monopoly of salt, betel-nut and such other necessities of life is equally fictitious; and at any rate these could not have adversely affected the Company; for the chief, or almost the exclusive articles which the Company instructed its agents in Bengal to procure were saltpetre, *taffatees* and *maslins*.

In fact the charge of oppression and exaction is inconsistent not only with the acknowledged prosperity of Bengal under Shāista Khān, but also with the indisputable growth of the Company's trade in Bengal during this period. When Shāista Khān succeeded to the viceroyalty of Bengal the Company's Bengal trade was not promising so that they once thought in terms of "discontinuing the factories in that place."<sup>1</sup> Yet the Bengal factories were not only not abandoned, within a few years the Company's Bengal trade was considerably expanded. And in 1668, only two years after Shāista Khān's conquest of Chittagong and the consequent suppression of piracy in lower Bengal, the East India Company founded a new factory at Dacca itself, Shāista Khān's own capital. The sales of Bengal goods in Europe, particularly *maslins*, turned out so profitable that the Company raised its stock considerably.<sup>2</sup> A glance at the rise in the Company's Bengal investments will bear out the rapid growth of its trade during this period. Thus, whereas in 1659 its Bengal investment amounted to only £ 10,000, it was raised to £ 85,000 in 1674, to £ 100,000 in 1677, and to over £ 1,50,000 in 1681.<sup>3</sup> This increase in the volume of Bengal trade led the Company in 1682 to separate the Bengal factories from the control of the Madras Council and to set them on an independent footing. For that purpose they appointed William Hedges, with special powers, to be their agent and governor in the Bay of Bengal. Hedges arrived in Bengal in the middle of 1682. At that time the Company further raised its Bengal investment from £ 1,50,000 to £ 230,000. Of this amount Hedges was directed to allocate £ 140,000 for Kasimbazar factory, £ 14,500 for Patna, £ 32,000 for Balasore, £ 15,000 for Malda, £ 16,500 for Dacca and £ 12,000

<sup>1</sup> Foster, W. (ed.): *English Factories in India* (Hereafter cited as *E.F.I.*), 1665-1667, p.135.

<sup>2</sup> Bradley-Birt, *op.cit.*, p.150.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, Vol. X, p.275; John Bruce, *Annals of the East India Company*, (3 Vols. London, 1810.) Vol. II, pp.228, 361.

for Hugli.<sup>3</sup>

These facts showing the continuous increase in the volume of the Company's trade in Bengal are sufficient to militate against the charges of avarice and oppression on the part of the Nawwāb. Yet these are precisely the allegations made by those who were entrusted with the Company's affairs in Bengal, and it is on such statements that Sarkar and others have drawn heavily in describing Shāista Khān's attitude to the Company. The following facts will explain why such statements of the English factors should not be taken at their face value.

During the viceroyalty of Shāista Khān, William Blake, Shyem Bridges, Walter Clavell, Matthias Vincent and William Hedges were the Company's chiefs in Bengal till 1669, 1670, 1677, 1682 and 1684 respectively. These men, along with their subordinates, were engaged in extensive private trade which violated not only the trade regulations of the Mughal government, but also the monopoly of the Company itself.<sup>2</sup> Instances are not wanting to show that they often utilized the Company's capital for their private trade and transferred their personal debts to the Company's account. Thus in 1668 Blake transferred his private debt of rupees 7,000 to the Company's account and showed another irregular expenditure of rupees 5,000 as presents to the Nawwāb's officials and general charges which, in fact, had not been incurred.<sup>3</sup> Between 1664 and 1669 the irregular and false entries in the account books, shown as presents to the Mughal officials, amounted to rupees 164,686.<sup>4</sup> Matthias Vincent, who was the Company's chief in Bengal from 1677 to 1682, was himself in league with the notorious "interloper", the "Pirate Pitt", who married Vincent's niece. It was because the Directors of the Company were disgusted at what they called Vincent's "odious infidelity in countenancing interlopers" that he was superseded by William Hedges when the course of setting the Bengal factories on an independant footing was decided upon in

<sup>1</sup> Bruce, *op.cit.*, p.492.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of these private trade operations see Sir Richard Temple's articles in *B.P.P.*, Vol. XVII, pp.121-42, and Miss Anstey's articles in the *Indian Antiquary*, 1905 and 1915.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p.262.

<sup>4</sup> *Bengal and Madras Papers*, Imperial Record Deptt., Calcutta, 1928, Vol.I, pp.1-12.

1681. But Hedges similarly succumbed to the temptation of private trade and after only two years openly joined the band of the interlopers. It is therefore not very difficult to see why these agents of the Company were interested in giving exaggerated, and even false, accounts of the "exactions" and "oppressions" of the Nawwāb and his officials. As one goes carefully through the factory records one may easily see that the factors too often make the general allegations of exactions and oppression without, however, substantiating their statements by mentioning the exact amounts, or the occasions on which these were taken by the Nawwāb or by his officials. On the other hand the factors mention on more than one occasion throughout this period that their payment to the Nawwāb was only a specified annual amount and that too was far less than the customs duties paid regularly by the other foreign traders, especially the Dutch.<sup>1</sup>

In order to form a correct idea about Shāista Khān's relations with the English East India Company it is necessary therefore not to rely exclusively upon the general and for the most part unsubstantiated statements of the factors but to take into account the whole course of the Company's trade in Bengal during this period noting the other relevant information from their own records. For such an investigation the viceroyalty of Shāista Khān may be divided into three periods, viz., 1664-1669, 1670-1677 and 1679-1688, and their chief features may be outlined as follows.

The first period starts obviously with the accession of Shāista Khān to the viceroyalty of Bengal. As a newcomer the Nawwāb naturally took some time to study the situation, including the matters of trade. His first reaction could not therefore be anything else than continuation of the position which the Company was supposed to have been enjoying.<sup>2</sup> A real trouble for them during the early years of Shāista Khān's viceroyalty was, however, the Anglo-Dutch war of 1665-1667. The Nawwāb enforced strict neutrality by requiring the combatant nations to refrain from hostilities within his dominions.<sup>3</sup> This saved the English factories

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Bengal letter to Surat, 20 October 1668, *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.167.

<sup>2</sup> Hugli letter to Surat, 21 June 1664; *E.F.I.*, 1661-64, p.395.

<sup>3</sup> Blake's letter to Balasore, 3 Sep. 1665, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p.141.

in the Bengal coast from the onslaughts of the superior Dutch navy. During the continuance of the war the trade of the Company was at a standstill. The energies of the Nawwāb, on the other hand, were mainly engaged in the conquest of Chittagong (1666) and the consolidation of Mughal authority there. It was therefore only after the conclusion of the Anglo-Dutch war in 1667 and the resumption of the Company's commercial activities in Bengal that the question of trade attracted the Nawwāb's attention. The result was that after some negotiations he granted them a *parwāna* in 1669 which allowed them to trade custom-free in Bengal in lieu of an annual payment of 3,000 rupees to the Nawwāb.<sup>1</sup>

The second period of the Nawwāb's relationship with the Company, which extended from 1670 to 1677, witnessed the working of the *parwāna* of 1669. During this period the Dutch competition in the Bengal trade was the fiercest. But what caused some trouble in the execution of the *parwāna* of 1669 was the great increase in the import of English goods in Bengal by the Company.<sup>2</sup> The governor (*faujdār*) of Hugli, Malīk Qāsim,<sup>3</sup> maintained that the *parwāna* of 1669 did not apply to the goods imported and that therefore the Company should pay customs duties on them. This resulted in a controversy between Malīk Qāsim and the English factors.<sup>4</sup> The matter was ultimately brought before the Nawwāb who, by a *parwāna* of 1672 decided in favour of the Company.<sup>5</sup> Their trade was, however, once again hampered by the outbreak of another Anglo-Dutch war which lasted from 1672 to 1674. There was an acute shortage of funds at the hands of the factors during this period.<sup>6</sup> Added to these were

<sup>1</sup> *Hague Transcript*, series I, vol. XXIX, No. 754, quoted in *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.316; also Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, vol. II, part I, pp.184, 185, 187.

<sup>2</sup> Company's letter to Hugli factors, 24 Jan. 1668, *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.170.

<sup>3</sup> Malīk Qāsim was actually the *faujdār* of Hugli, but this officer is always referred to as "governor" in the English records.

<sup>4</sup> See Bridges to Hall, 7 May 1669, *ibid.*, p.297; and Bagnall's letter to Clavall, 9 January 1672, Factory Records, Hugli, Vol. VII, pp.24-29, also *E.F.I.*, (ed. C. Fawcett,) 1670-1677, p.348.

<sup>5</sup> Factory Records, Hugli, Vol. VII, p.74; also *E.F.I.*, 1670-1677, p.349. See for a translation of the *parwāna*, *ibid.*, pp.349-50; Streynsham Master's *Diary*, vol. II, pp.22-24; Stewart, *op.cit.*, Appendix III.

<sup>6</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.435.

the mounting squabbles and quarrels among the factors themselves.<sup>1</sup> This state of affairs led the Company in 1676 to send at first Major Puckle and then Streynshan Master to inspect the Bengal factories and to carry out necessary reforms. Towards the close of the period some trouble was caused by the reported orders of the emperor Aurangzeb to levy customs duties on all the English goods.<sup>2</sup> Shāista Khān did not, however, enforce these orders and allowed the Company to carry on their trade according to the *parwāna* of 1669.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of 1677 he was recalled from Bengal by the emperor.

The third period comprises the second term of Shāista Khān's viceroyalty which lasted from 1679 to 1688. During this period the Company's relationship with the Nawwāb became increasingly strained. Two broad facts were responsible for this. First, the Nawwāb appears to have returned to Bengal with a changed attitude towards the Company probably because he had come to know from the imperial court that their claims to the privilege of free trade were not in accord with the *farmān* of 1650 on which all subsequent grants were based. Secondly, during this period the "interlopers" or the English free-traders appeared in Bengal in large numbers. They were even ready to pay the usual customs duties. The Nawwāb naturally did not see any reason to discriminate between the two groups of traders of the same nation. The Company succeeded in obtaining a *farmān* from the emperor in 1680 which, however, imposed 3½ p.c. duties on the goods of the English, but the latter unjustifiably claimed that it did not apply to Bengal.<sup>4</sup> The Nawwāb's attempts to levy customs duties on the Company's goods, though just and natural, were much resented by the English. But it was not this so-called "oppression" of the Nawwāb which led to the war between him and the Company in 1686-1688. The latter had in fact by this time come over to a "forward policy."<sup>5</sup> The Dutch wars had brought

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.333, 370-72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.409-10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.417.

<sup>4</sup> Stewart: *op.cit.*, Appendix, IV; also Hedges, *Diary*, vol. 1, pp.33-62, 91-101; *E.F.I.*, 1678-84, p.294.

<sup>5</sup> G.N. Clark, *The Later Stuarts*, Oxford, 1949, pp.336-37.



home to the East India Company that there was little hope for them of competing with the Dutch in Indonesia and when in 1682, in time of peace, the Dutch expelled the English from their factory at Bantam, the latter turned their entire energies and attention towards the south Asian subcontinent. Henceforth they were bent upon establishing their hold there by all means. The appearance in the Indian waters of English interlopers, who could be effectively checked only by the application of force by the Company itself, also suggested the adoption of an aggressive policy. The same feeling was further strengthened by the depredations of the Marathas who, under Shivaji, thrice threatened the English factory at Surat in 1664, 1670 and 1677. The combined effect of these developments was that the Company was from this time all the more determined to hold their factories by their own might and not by the grants of the Mughal government. This attitude was reflected in the charter granted to the Company in 1683 which empowered them, *inter alia*, to make war and peace and to enter into alliances with Indian rulers.<sup>1</sup> The charter granted by James II in 1686 was still wider. According to it the Company was, as the directors described it, "in the condition of a sovereign state in India."<sup>2</sup> It was this attitude which ultimately prompted the Company to declare war against the Mughals in 1686. In a despatch of 1687, which has often been quoted, the directors urged their agent at Surat to "establish such a politie of civil and military power and create and secure such a large revenue... as may be the foundation of a large, well-grounded sure English dominion in India for all time to come."

It is therefore time to discard the theory of the Nawwāb's alleged oppression as an adequate explanation of the cause of the Company's declaration of war against the Mughals in 1686. As already indicated, a correct appraisal of Shāista Khān's relation with the East India Company is possible only by a detailed study of the Company's trade in Bengal during the three periods outlined above.

<sup>1</sup> Hunter, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp.185, 288.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.304.

## II. THE FIRST PERIOD, FROM 1664 TO 1669

At the time of Shāista Khān's accession to the viceroyalty of Bengal the English traders had, as noted earlier,<sup>1</sup> a dubious position obtained by a misrepresentation of Shāh Jahān's *farmān* of 1650. It has also been shown that they were aware of that fact. Hence they continued to pay each year to the viceroys, Prince Shujā' and his successor Mīr Jumla, the "present" of 3000 rupees, and to hush up any "troublesome" local officer by bribing him.<sup>2</sup> In doing so their intention was to base the claim to custom-free trade in course of time not upon the *farmān* of 1650 which they knew did not secure for them any right in Bengal, nor upon the *nishān* of 1651, which was acknowledgedly obtained "by stratagem" or misrepresentation, but upon practice and usage. In fact, before long they began to emphasize what they called their "customary privileges."<sup>3</sup>

When Shāista Khān came to Bengal as the viceroy the Company's factors appear to have persuaded themselves that their privilege of free trade had been established by a decade of practice and that therefore it was not necessary for them even to make the annual payment of 3,000 rupees to the Nawwāb. The new Nawwāb arrived in Bengal early in March 1664. William Blake, the Company's chief in Bengal, at once hurried to Rajmahal to meet him and to procure from him an "order" forbidding the governor of Hugli to make any "demands in future for that annual payment of 3,000 rupees," and also to procure the Nawwāb's "general parwana for a free trade, as formerly granted by his predecessors..."<sup>4</sup> Shāista Khān was obviously in haste; and he appears to have allowed the Company, for the time being, to continue to enjoy those privileges which had been granted by the earlier Nawwābs.<sup>5</sup> This in fact was a general order and it did not really improve the Company's legal position in any way. Soon, however, the Nawwāb was in a better position to understand the

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp. 373-374.

<sup>2</sup> See also *Master's Diary*, Vol. I, p. 491.

<sup>3</sup> See *E.F.I.*, 1670-1677, p. 416.

<sup>4</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1661-1664, p. 394.

<sup>5</sup> Hugli letter to Surat, 21 June 1664, *ibid.*, p. 395.

situation and to devote his attention to the regulation of the country's trade. He decided to levy the usual custom duty on the Company's goods (as was in fact the purpose of the imperial *farmān* of 1650). This decision coincided with an imperial requisition for the procurement of a large quantity of saltpetre (used in the manufacture of gunpowder). Accordingly in May 1664 Shāista Khān sent his *dāroga* to Patna, the principal place of saltpetre manufacture, with orders to forbid the Dutch as well as the English to procure any saltpetre before the imperial requirement (of 20,000 maunds) was obtained.<sup>1</sup> This step was naturally distasteful to the foreign traders, including the English, who were in the habit of advancing money to the petre-men and thereby procuring saltpetre at a considerably low price.<sup>2</sup> Job Charnock, the Company's factor at Patna, misconstrued the Nawwāb's orders and alleged that his real intentions were to "get this whole trade of peeter into his own hands, and so to sell it againe to us and the Dutch at his own rates, he well knowing the ships cannot goe from the Bay empty."<sup>3</sup> It is not known whether the desired quantity of 20,000 *maunds* of salt-petre was procured for the emperor; but Charnock's allegations against the Nawwāb were totally baseless, for the latter did not monopolize the saltpetre trade, nor was there any general stop of the foreign traders' investment in that trade. In fact Charnock himself expressed his confidence that if he was supplied with necessary funds, he would be able to procure 25 or 30,000 *maunds* of saltpetre yearly, "whereas hitherto 18,000 had been the limit."<sup>4</sup> That he was able to collect and send down to Bengal enough saltpetre for the Company's shipping that year is known from a subsequent communication.<sup>5</sup> The only thing which Shāista Khān did was that he realized the usual custom duty on this saltpetre consignment which amounted to 2,600 rupees only.<sup>6</sup> This amount was obviously less than the 3,000 rupees which the English factors

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Charnock's note added to the letter referred to above, *ibid.*, pp.395-396.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.396.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.397.

<sup>6</sup> Bengal letter to Surat, 4 October, *Ibid.*, p.399.

used to pay annually to Shāista Khān's predecessors.

The prospect of regular realization of custom duty irritated the English factors so much that they began to refer repeatedly to this single incident as the "abuses" received from the Nawwāb. Perhaps an added source of irritation was the realization by the governor of Kasimbazar of an amount of 5,672 rupees from the Company's factors there who had taken the money as loan from the deceased Nawwāb Mīr Jumla.<sup>1</sup> These steps towards regularization of the Company's trading activities in Bengal brought home to the English factors that the belief of their having established a customary privilege of free trade was abortive and ill-founded. This realization produced two attitudes in them. On the one hand, they were henceforth desirous of obtaining a fresh *farmān* from the Emperor Aurangzeb.<sup>2</sup> Such a *farmān*, it may be noted, ought to have been sought much earlier, immediately after the accession of Aurangzeb (1658), for by its very nature the imperial grant was *pro-libitum*, i.e., effective only during the continuance of the rule of its issuer, and it required to be renewed on the accession of a new ruler.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, their unjustified sense of rebuff prompted them to contemplate the use of force. Thus in a communication of January 1665 the factors, after repeating the allegations of "exactions" and "abuses" by the Nawwāb, (of which no specific instance was cited) wrote to the Company:

"Your worships must consider that these people are growne more powerfull than formerly, and will not bee so subject to us as they have byn, unless they bee a little bitten by us, that they may understand, if they impeede us by land, it lyeth in our power to requiet them by sea."<sup>4</sup>

It is not known what was the reaction of the Company's Directors to this recommendation for the use of force. Such a suggestion was completely uncalled for and it was surely born of a false sense of injury. That there was no unjustified and illegal interference

<sup>1</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1661-1664, p.397.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 393, 394, 396.

<sup>3</sup> The imperial *farmān* cannot be regarded as a commercial treaty so that it does not come to an end simply with the change of government. (See Hunter: *A History of British India*, London, 1900, vol. II, p.51, n.1.) That the factors were aware of the *pro-libitum* nature of the *farmān* is obvious from their subsequent communications. See *E.F.I.*, 1668-1669, p.178.

<sup>4</sup> Madras letter to the Company, 12 January 1665, *E.F.I.*, 1661-1664, p.401.

with the Company's trade in Bengal is further confirmed by the expansion of saltpetre investment at Patna in 1665,<sup>1</sup> "so that now", wrote the Bengal factors, "if [we] had moneys, 1,000 tonns might easily yearly be procured."<sup>2</sup> Similarly *taffatees* (cloth) at Kasimbazar had also been improved in quality and it was felt that a large investment might be made there.

During the middle of the year (1665) the Bengal factors expected the arrival of ships from England. Remembering the realization of customs duties by Shāista Khān last year, they decided this year to satisfy him beforehand. Hence in June Blake and Elwes, the Company's Chief and Second respectively in the Bengal Council, procured some presents to the value of a little over 2,000 rupees and sent them to the Nawwāb at Dacca.<sup>3</sup> The latter, we are told, was "well content" with the presents and assured that the Company would not be molested at any place within his jurisdiction. He also issued orders on all his governors directing them not to interfere with the passage of the Company's own or hired boats.<sup>4</sup> When therefore the ships, the *Greyhound* and the *American*, arrived at Balasore on 17 August, the Bengal factors were happy to inform the Directors that they (the factors) "already had in hand a good stock of saltpetre" to lade "both ships to their full capacity." They also complacently informed their masters that it cost them a little over 2,000 rupees to have their goods cleared that year, whereas in the previous year it had cost them "neere 3,000 rupees."<sup>5</sup> Thus it is clear that although the factors repeatedly spoke vaguely about exactions and oppression by the Nawwāb, they had not actually paid him anything more than the usual custom duty in 1664, which amounted to nearly 3,000 rupees (2,600 rupees), and presents worth a little over 2,000 rupees in 1665, to have their goods cleared in both the years. This also shows that they had stopped, with the accession of Shāista Khān, the payment of the yearly present of 3,000 rupees which they had paid to the previous Nawwābs. As already indicated, it

<sup>1</sup> Bengal letter to Madras, 24 April 1665, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p.134.

<sup>2</sup> Bengal letter to the Company, 1 Sept. 1665, *ibid.*, p.139.

<sup>3</sup> Bengal letter to Company, 1 Sept. 1665, *ibid.*, p.138, 140.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.140.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138.

was not that Shāista Khān exacted more money from the Company's factors but that they were now faced with the probability of regular payment of customs duties that irritated them too much and prompted them to write harshly about the Nawwāb in almost all their communications to their masters.

A real trouble for the factors was, however, the outbreak of the Anglo-Dutch War (4 March 1665). Before the ships could leave Bengal, however, three Dutch warships arrived near Masulipatam on the eastern coast of the Deccan and seized an English vessel. The Masulipatam factors at once informed the Bengal factors of this incident and asked them to take necessary precautions, for the Dutch ships might shortly be expected in the Bengal waters.<sup>1</sup> William Blake immediately visited the governor [*faujdar*] of Hugli, Mirzā Malik Beg, and sought his protection against the apprehended hostile actions of the Dutch. In an open *darbār*, "making all persons witnesses", he undertook on behalf of the Emperor and the Nawwāb, to compensate the English for any damage that might be caused to their persons or property by any warlike act of the Dutch committed within the territories of Shāista Khān and in the coastal waters.<sup>2</sup> The governor also made the Dutch factors give a written undertaking whereby they promised to conform to the rules of neutrality and to "make double satisfaction" of what the English "should suffer through their meanes."<sup>3</sup> Mirzā Malik Beg wrote to the Nawwāb about the steps thus taken to ensure neutrality. Blake was so satisfied with these arrangements that he confidently wrote to Balasore: "He [Mirzā Malik Beg] and all declares that, according to custome of these countryes, the King is bound to make us satisfaction, in case the Dutch should doe us any dammidge in the mentioned cases."<sup>4</sup> With the exception of a single hostile act committed by the Dutch in the Bengal coastal waters before the above noted arrangements were known to them,<sup>5</sup> they faithfully kept their promise during

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Masulipatam to Bengal, 12 August 1665, *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Blake's letter to Balasore, 3 Sept. 1665, *ibid.*, p. 141. It is not known, however, what exactly was the extent of water included in the Mughal viceroy's concept of "coastal waters."

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Balasore letter to Madras, 20 Sept. 1665, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p. 144.

the continuance of the war and the English factors did not find any difficulty in bringing their saltpetre and other goods down to Balasore.<sup>1</sup>

But although strict neutrality was thus enforced within the Nawwāb's dominions and along the coastal waters, the Dutch were free to carry on their hostilities on the open seas. During the continuance of the war, therefore, neither could the *Greyhound* and the *American* leave Balasore for fear of being captured by the Dutch in the open sea,<sup>2</sup> nor did any ship arrive from England except the *Dorcas*, the smallest ship<sup>3</sup> ever sent by the Company to India, which reached Balasore in May 1666 by a direct voyage from England (without touching at Madras coast).<sup>4</sup> It was laden with the goods which were already at Balasore and it sailed away from Bengal in October.<sup>5</sup> The non-arrival of ships caused an acute shortage of funds. Although the Company's business during this time was almost at a standstill the factors needed money to keep the business on foot by making advances to the petre-men at Patna and the silk manufacturers at Kasimbazar. In fact the factors succeeded in preventing the best petre-men from deserting to the Dutch only by obtaining a sum of 25,000 rupees from a Dutch private merchant against a bill of exchange drawn on the Company.<sup>6</sup> The absence of shipment and of procurement of goods by the factors thus practically left no occasion for Shāista Khān to realize any custom duty from 1665 to 1669. Nor do the factors mention any specific payment to the Nawwāb during this period although, in their usual fashion, they continued to refer in general terms to the Nawwāb's alleged "avarice", "villany" and "oppression."<sup>7</sup> Such an attitude of the factors appears all the more strange in view of the Nawwāb's measures for the protection of the English factories against the hostilities of the Dutch.

<sup>1</sup> See Bridge's protests against the commanders of the *Greyhound* and the *American*, 12 and 13 Dec., 1665, *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> It had a capacity of 75 tons only.

<sup>4</sup> Hugli letter to Surat, 26 Sept., 1666, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* It could not reach England, however, because it was captured by a Dutch privateer near the Sicilies.

<sup>6</sup> Bengal letter to Masulipatam, 20 April 1666, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p. 258.

<sup>7</sup> Hugli letter to Surat, 12 April 1666; to Masulipatam, 20 April 1666; and to Surat, 26 September 1666, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, pp. 257, 258, 260.

It was also during the Anglo-Dutch war that Shāista Khān's attention was mainly directed towards the conquest and subjugation of Chittagong. As already noted, in this task he sought the cooperation of the Dutch. Whether he also approached the English is not clear; but the English factors in Bengal wrote to their superiors in southern India that assistance to the Nawwāb would much further their masters' business in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The Company's agents in southern India were, however, hesitant about rendering such help because they thought Shāista Khān's conquest of Chittagong would have an adverse effect on the Company's trade with the Arakanese, and also because of the extra expenses such military assistance to the Nawwāb would involve.<sup>2</sup> They therefore wrote to the Bengal factors that should they feel that there was an absolute necessity to assist the Nawwāb they could agree to do so only if he undertook to reimburse the company for the expenses of the English help in the expedition and for any consequent loss on account of the Arakanese refusal to pay their debts to the English.<sup>3</sup> The outbreak of the Anglo-Dutch war towards the middle of 1665, however, altered the whole situation. The English, who had been from the beginning hesitant about their participation in the Nawwāb's campaign, now abandoned all thought of doing so. The Dutch, on the other hand, agreed to assist the Nawwāb,<sup>4</sup> and also withdrew their men and business from Arakan, "conceiving it arises from their promise to assist the king in the conquest of the said country."<sup>5</sup> As mentioned before, Shāista Khān did not ultimately need even the Dutch help.

Immediately after the conquest of Chittagong the Nawwāb, with a view partly to eradicating piracy from southern Bengal<sup>6</sup> and partly to regulating the country's trade in a more effective way persuaded the emperor to transfer Balasore and Pipli to his (Shāista Khān's) jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup> The factors suspected that this was

<sup>1</sup> Masulipatam letter to Hugli, 8 October 1664, *ibid.*, p.399.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Balasore letter to Madras, 20 September 1665, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p.144.

<sup>5</sup> Balasore letter to Masulipatam, 19 January 1666, *ibid.*, p.258.

<sup>6</sup> Subsequently Shāista Khān dealt severely with the Portuguese and put an end to their depredations in lower Bengal.

<sup>7</sup> Bengal letter to Masulipatam, 20 April, 1666, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, pp.258-59.



a prelude to a tightening of trade regulations against them, particularly perhaps to the demand of the annual present of 3,000 rupees for the English trade at these ports.<sup>1</sup> Their apprehensions were ill-founded, for the Nawwāb did not impose any extra levy on the English traders on account of their trading activities at those places; and there was no further reference to this matter in the correspondence of the factors.

A real cause of misunderstanding between the Nawwāb and the factors was, however, the flight of Thomas Pratt, hitherto their agent at Dacca. This person had managed the affairs of the Company at the Nawwāb's court since the time of Mīr Jumla. After the conquest of Chittagong Pratt appears to have been enrolled by Shāista Khān in the imperial service as a *mansabdār* of 300 troops.<sup>2</sup> In August 1667 he was furnished with a sum of 10,000 rupees and was commissioned to visit the imperial court; but suddenly he deserted the Nawwāb and with "two or three Englishmen and several Portugeze" escaped to a frontier fort of the Arakanese king. On his way "he engaged some of the Nabobs vessels and did some mischief, carrying away two of them."<sup>3</sup> The reason given for this sudden volte-face of Pratt was that he came to know through some source that the Nawwāb suspected him of having been in secret correspondence with the Arakanese ruler and that this was communicated to the emperor.<sup>4</sup> It is not known whether this was really the case; but Pratt's subsequent conduct rather confirms the Nawwāb's alleged suspicion. For if Pratt intended merely to escape an apprehended retribution, he could easily have left Bengal and taken shelter in any of the English factories in south India. This he did not only not do; but after his escape he came with an Arakanese force and recaptured a frontier fort which Shāista Khān had previously taken.<sup>5</sup> Such a step could not but have been taken after much deliberation and prolonged consideration. In any case Pratt's conduct naturally angered Shāista Khān who, in a strong note sent to the factors

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Bengal letter to Surat, 20 Oct. 1668, *E.F.I.*, 1668-1669, p.167.

<sup>3</sup> Bengal letter to Madras (Foxcroft), 23 December 1667, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p.330.

<sup>4</sup> Bengal letter to Surat, *op.cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Bengal letter to Madras, *op.cit.*

about the middle of October, required them to recall Pratt, and in case of non-compliance, threatened them with total stoppage of their business within the province.<sup>1</sup>

In reply the factors pointed out that Pratt was not the Company's servant, nor was he "entertaynd on our recommendation" and that "if any was responsible, it must be his security."<sup>2</sup> In thus disowning Pratt the factors were obviously emphasizing his recent employment in the imperial service. They were however ignoring the fact that Pratt, though not at that particular moment a servant of the Company, occupied the position of an agent, or at least that of a quasi-agent; for immediately prior to his flight he was endeavouring to secure justice for the Company against an alleged wrong committed by the Dutch.<sup>3</sup> Shāista Khān, however, acted with complete composure. He did not take any vengeance upon the factors, but realized from his security, who were two respectable Muslims, the sum of 12,000 rupees which Pratt and his associates had received from the Nawwāb.<sup>4</sup> The treacherous deserter and his associates were ultimately killed by the Arakanese king "on some jealousies of their fidelity."<sup>5</sup>

The prospect of the resumption of trade after the end of the Anglo-Dutch war (by the treaty of Breda, July 1667) led Shāista Khān to reiterate his demand early in 1668 for the usual customs duties from the English. When therefore a "small parcell of petre from Patna" was being sent down to Hugli the English were told that *in future* they would have to pay customs on their goods unless they produced a new grant from Shāista Khān, the grants that they possessed at his coming into office being "now of no value".<sup>6</sup> The factors thought that the Nawwāb's decision was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, pp.330-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.330. As late as September 1665 the factors wrote to their master that Pratt had been retained as their agent at Dacca because "there was no other person so fitting to mannidge our complaints at court..." (Bengal letter to Madras, 1 September 1665, *E.F.I.*, 1665-1667, p.140.)

<sup>4</sup> Bengal letter to Madras, 20 October 1668, *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.167.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* According to Manucci (Vol. II, pp.102-104) the Nawwāb got rid of Pratt by a stratagem. A letter was written to him asking him to return to Dacca, as promised, with the Arakan king's head. The letter was so contrived that it fell into the hands of the Arakanese monarch who, thinking that his new ally meditated treachery, put him to death. Manucci refers to Dāud Khān as the Nawwāb; but W.Foster suggests that the latter should be Shāista Khān.

<sup>6</sup> Bengal letter to Surat, 20 Oct. 1668, *E.F.I.*, 1668-1669, p.166.

occasioned partly by Pratt's flight and partly by the practice of the Dutch who paid him regular custom duties besides large and valuable presents.<sup>1</sup> But there was nothing really new in the demand; for in the first and the second year of his viceroyalty Shāista Khān had in fact demanded and realized custom duty from the English; and the matter had naturally remained in abeyance during the Anglo-Dutch war when the English trade was practically at a standstill. The English factors were hopeful, however, that Shāista Khān might not ultimately enforce his decision to levy customs "considering our long enjoyed privileges to the contrary, given by the Prince [Shujā'] and since confirmed by several Nabobs..."<sup>2</sup> In fact, on account of the extreme paucity of capital the factors were as yet unable to resume their trading activities on any appreciable scale and were eagerly awaiting the arrival of ships.<sup>3</sup>

The much awaited ships arrived at Balasore by the middle of 1669. These were the *Antelope* and the *John and Martha*, which brought for the Bengal factors £ 20,000 in treasure (in rials of eight) and £ 9,270 in goods.<sup>4</sup> Prior to the arrival of the ships, however, Shem Bridges, who succeeded Blake as the chief of the English factors, had sent a deputation headed by John March (Second at Kasimbazar) to Shāista Khān at Dacca to secure his favour and the removal of what the English termed as the "obstacles" placed in the way of their trade by his orders.<sup>5</sup> March was instructed to placate the Nawwāb by offering him seven 20s. gold pieces and 9 rupees at the first interview, and presents to other officials, and was also to seek redress for the Dutch attack on the English ships during the last war.<sup>6</sup>

While March was at Dacca Malīk Qāsim, the governor of Hugli, acting obviously in accordance with the order for the levy of customs, refused to pass custom-free the goods imported by the English.<sup>7</sup> The factors thought that the governor was actuated

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300, n. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 295-296.

<sup>6</sup> O.C. 3265, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 315. See *supra*, p. 462, regarding the Dutch attack.

<sup>7</sup> Bridges to Hall, 7 May 1669, *E.F.I.*, 1668-1669, p. 297.

by a motive to monopolize the import trade for which, they further suspected, he had borrowed from the Nawwāb an amount of 300,000 rupees at 25% interest per annum.<sup>1</sup> The English suspicion was baseless and purely imaginery. As will be seen later on, there was no great demand for the goods imported by the English so as to induce any country merchant to be desirous to monopolize them.<sup>2</sup> The goods brought by the English ship that year, as mentioned already, was valued according to their saleable price at £ 9,270 (less than 100,000 rupees) only. It was therefore also quite unlikely for any trader to borrow treble that amount (300,000 rupees) at 25% interest per annum for securing those goods. Moreover Shāista Khān, who strictly followed the rules of the *shari'at* in his personal life as well as in state affairs (which was also the clear directive of the emperor Aurangzeb) would be the last man to lend money at interest, which is strictly prohibited in Islamic law, to a subordinate official of his. Far from lending money to his governor, Shāista Khān, as will be seen presently,<sup>3</sup> did not even support him in his attempt to recover a small amount which the English had borrowed from him. However, as nothing more is heard of the matter inspite of Bridge's intention to take up the matter at Dacca if the Hugli governor persisted in his opposition to pass the goods,<sup>4</sup> it may be presumed that the matter was amicably settled at Hugli.

During the continuance of March's negotiations at Dacca another incident took place which justifiably made Bridges apprehensive of Shāista Khān's displeasure. For a few months past a serious quarrel had been going on between William Blake, the chief of the English factors, and Shem Bridges, who now succeeded him as the chief. The controversy centred round private trade affairs, maintenance of the Company's accounts, and in general the conduct of the Company's affairs in Bengal.<sup>5</sup> In course of the controversy the affairs of "Mir Jumlah's boxes" were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, also Bridges to Bagnall, 28 May 1669, *ibid.*, p.299.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, p. 475.

<sup>3</sup> *Infra*, p. 476.

<sup>4</sup> Bridges to Hall, 7 May and to Bagnall, 28 May, 1669, *op.cit.*

<sup>5</sup> For a short account of the quarrel between Blake and Bridges see *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, pp.297-303.

disclosed. These were two sealed boxes supposed to contain jewels and given for delivery to Mīr Jumla by one "Tap Tap" [Ṭabāṭabā'ī] of Masulipatam when Blake and Bridges visited that port in 1662/63. Mīr Jumla was, however, dead by the time Blake and Bridges came back to Bengal. For about two years the boxes remained untouched in the factory at Balasore: then these were opened and "perused" by Blake, and were still in the factory when the latter was preparing to go home in 1669.<sup>1</sup> As these facts were now known outside the factory Bridges was apprehensive of the consequences for concealing the matter for so long from the view of Mīr Jumla's successors as well as of the Nawwāb Shāista Khān and for the apparent interference with their contents. Bridges therefore promptly instructed March to acquaint the Nawwāb that the boxes had been overlooked and only just found.<sup>2</sup> On being thus informed the Nawwāb ordered the governor of Balasore to send Blake up to Dacca with these boxes.<sup>3</sup> The latter thought that this order was instigated by Bridges and demanded of him to take steps for the withdrawal of the order. If these were not done, Blake threatened to urge Shāista Khān to call up Bridges as well. This threat appears to have induced Bridges to approach the governor of Balasore for postponing the immediate execution of the Nawwāb's orders.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently Blake escaped from Bengal with the assistance of Captain Gough, the commander of the *John and Martha*.<sup>5</sup> To avert any possible detention of the ships and otherwise to satisfy the governor of Balasore Bridges gave him an undertaking to make good anything found to be missing from the boxes.<sup>6</sup>

The affair of the boxes does not appear to have greatly stirred

<sup>1</sup> Bridges to the Company, *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.174.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.299.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.302.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.302-303.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.309. Gough was dismissed from service by the Company for the part he had played in Blake's escape. The latter was on the other hand involved in law suit with the Company which ended in a verdict against him on several points.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.317. The end of the boxes is recorded in a consultation of 28 May 1670 (*Factory Records*, Hugli, Vol.I, p.41) which states that "the late fire at Balasore having together with the most part of the towne and Mr. Blake's dwelling house, consumed the Mier Jumlah's parcells." (*E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.314, n. 1.) One might suspect that the fire was wilfully caused to hush up the affair of the boxes.

Shāista Khān; for March's negotiations at Dacca continued smoothly. And although the English factors were aware of the weakness of their position,<sup>1</sup> the Nawwāb granted them a *parwāna* whereby he dropped his intention of levying 4% customs duties. The English were to pay him annually the sum of 3,000 rupees and in lieu thereof they were allowed to trade customs-free within his dominions. He also issued orders upon the Dutch to make good any damage that they had caused to the English within his territory during the last Anglo-Dutch war.<sup>2</sup>

Having thus concluded his deputation to the Nawwāb March returned to Kasimbazar early in November 1669.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime the ships had been laden partly with the goods that had been in stock at Balasore since 1665 and partly with those that were procured during the last few months. They left Balasore early in December (1669). There is no mention of the payment of either any custom duty or the stipulated sum of 3,000 rupees for this year's consignment.

The year 1669 thus ended with a clarification of the exact position of the Company in Bengal. With the accession of Shāista Khān they had stopped the yearly payment of 3,000 rupees to the Nawwāb on the ill-founded assumption that they had succeeded in establishing a customary right of free trade in Bengal. The Nawwāb refused to recognize this and decided to levy the usual customs duties which in fact was quite in conformity with the imperial *farmān* of 1650. In 1664 he realized nearly 3,000 rupees from the English factors as the customs duties on the goods that were shipped from Bengal during that year. In the following year he did not actually realize the custom duty but in lieu thereof received presents worth a little more than 2,000 rupees. From the middle of 1665 to the end of 1668 no shipment of goods was made. There was thus no occasion for the Nawwāb to demand customs duties. Nor do the factors make mention of any specific payment to him during this period. On the other hand the

<sup>1</sup> See Hall to Bridges and Bridges to Hall, 12 May 1669, *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.298.

<sup>2</sup> *Hague Transcripts*, Series I, Vol. XXIX, no. 754, quoted in *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.316; also see Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol.II, part I, pp.184, 185, 187.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, pp.3,6.

Nawwāb maintained strict neutrality during the Anglo-Dutch conflict and required both the combatant nations to refrain from hostilities within his dominions and the coastal waters. This turned to the advantage of the English who were much weaker in the Bengal coast. Yet in their communications of this period the factors frequently accused Shāista Khān of "avarice", "villany" and "oppression". Such allegations had no real foundation and were most probably prompted by a sense of frustration which the factors felt on account of Shāista Khān's non-recognition of their otherwise ill-based and abortive claim to customary privilege of free trade. Another likely reason for their rather ungrateful attitude was perhaps the realization by the Nawwāb of the inland transit duties and tolls from the factors who were engaged in extensive private trade within the country. On the Nawwāb's side, he was rather preoccupied during the first three years of his viceroyalty with the conquest and subjugation of Chittagong. The attitude of the English factors towards the Nawwāb's Chittagong expedition was not too favourable. Some amount of discredit was also brought upon them by the desertion of Pratt. Yet neither this nor the affair of "Mir Jumlah's boxes" influenced Shāista Khān's attitude towards the English. And although the Dutch continued to pay 4 per cent customs duties on their goods the Nawwāb, when approached by the English for his favour gracefully dropped his claim for customs and only obliged the latter to revert to the position which they had obtained during the viceroyalty of Mīr Jumla. In this regard the significance of Shāista Khān's *parwāna* of 1669 was two-fold. First, it nullified the factors' pretention that they had established a customary privilege of free trade in Bengal. Secondly, it confirmed the legal principle, recognized even by the factors, that whatever privileges they had obtained from the preceding monarch or viceroy needed renewal or sanction by the succeeding incumbents.

### III: THE WORKING OF THE PARWĀNA OF 1669

With the conclusion of the Anglo-Dutch war and the granting of the *parwāna* by Shāista Khān in 1669 another period of peaceful trade began. The treasure brought by the ships in 1669, as

noted already, was sufficient for the investment of 1670. For 1671 also the factors received sufficient funds so much so that they did not find it necessary to make use of the power given them by the Company to draw upto £ 10,000 by bills of exchange.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the stock position for 1672 was also satisfactory, for the three ships that arrived at the Bay of Bengal during 1671<sup>2</sup> brought £ 11,500 in commodities and £ 30,000 in bullion. Besides, the factors were also authorized to raise from £ 10,000 to £ 12,000 by bills of exchange, if necessary.<sup>3</sup> Under these favourable circumstances the English factors in Bengal considerably extended their investments both at Kasimbazar and Patna. At other places also the investment was proportionately increased. In fact the Company's business was so enlarged that both at Kasimbazar and Dacca the factors were faced with the problem of lack of accommodation for the increased quantity of goods they had procured.<sup>4</sup>

In 1670, the first year after the new *parwāna* came into operation, four of the Company's ships, the *Zante*, the *Happy Entrance*, the *Rainbow* and the *Coast Frigate*, arrived at Balasore. These were laden with the goods procured in Bengal and were despatched towards the end of that year.<sup>5</sup> No hindrance was placed by the Nawwāb's officials upon the procurement and despatch of these goods, nor was there any levy of customs over and above the sum of Rs. 3,000 stipulated in the *parwāna*. The only problem which the factors faced was the transshipment of the huge quantity of goods from Hugli, where these were brought from Patna, Kasimbazar, Dacca and all other places, to Balasore, where the ships anchored. The same problem of transshipment of goods from Hugli to Balasore persisted in the following year (1671) when it took about four months, from August to the end of November, to lade the three homeward ships, the *East India*

<sup>1</sup> J Misc. 140; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.332.

<sup>2</sup> These were the *East India Merchant*, the *Sampson* and the *Bombay Merchant*. See below.

<sup>3</sup> Desp. to Fort, 29 Nov., 1670, 4. L.B. 391; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.333.

<sup>4</sup> Kas. letter, 1 Nov. 1671, & Dac. letter, 22 Dec., 1671, 7 Hug. 12,22; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, pp.336, 337.

<sup>5</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.329.



*Merchant*, the *Sampson*, and the *Bombay Merchant*.<sup>1</sup> The Chief commodities taken away by these ships were saltpetre, *taffatis*, raw silk, *sannoos* (*salus*), cotton yarn, turmeric, tincall, and "dusuttees" or coarse sail-cloth. Of these saltpetre formed the bulk and about 11,000 bags of that commodity alone were shipped from Bengal during the year 1671.<sup>2</sup>

Ever since the end of the war with the Dutch the English East India Company had been endeavouring to import and sell as much English products as possible in Bengal. In fact a substantial part of the stock supplied to Bengal was now made up of English commodities. The Company expected that the import of the English goods in Bengal should also be exempted from the payment of any customs. It is to be noted that the imperial *farmān* of 1650 and the subsequent *parwānas* applied only to the export trade. Even Shāista Khān's *parwāna* of 1669, which allowed the English to trade customs-free in lieu of the annual payment of 3,000 rupees, did not make any specific mention of this aspect of the Company's business presumably because it was very negligible at that time. The English claimed that their privilege of customs-free trade covered the import trade as well. As against this claim Malīk Qāsim, the governor of Hugli,<sup>3</sup> maintained that neither the Imperial *farmān* nor the subsequent *parwānas* envisaged this aspect of the Company's business and that therefore their privilege did not embrace the import of goods from outside. Early in January 1672 he refused to pass the English goods which were brought by the ships in 1671 and which were now brought to Hugli from Balasore by the Company's boats.<sup>4</sup> He even demanded an account of the goods and one of his officials brought a boat ashore for that purpose.<sup>5</sup> The factors resisted this and in course of doing so they even went to the length of applying force

<sup>1</sup> The vessels engaged for the transshipment of goods from Hugli to Balasore at this period were two pinnaces, the *Madras* and the *Diligence*, two sloops, the *Good Hope* and the *John*, and a number of hired country cargo-boats.

<sup>2</sup> Bagnall's letter, 19, 24 & 30 October, 2, 7, 11, 22, 24 & 28 November, 1671, 7 Hug. 5-7, 9, 10, 13, 15-21; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, pp. 334-335.

<sup>3</sup> Malīk Qāsim was the son of Malīk Beg, a former governor at Balasore, and had held office since 1668.

<sup>4</sup> Bagnall's letter to Clavell, 9 January 1672, 7 Hug. 24-25; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 348.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

and beating the official who was compelled to let the boat go.<sup>1</sup> Such highhandedness of the foreign traders naturally roused the displeasure of the governor who, however, only asked them to render an account of the goods or to substantiate their claim to the privilege by producing, within ten days, the Emperor's *farmān* or the *parwānas* granted by Shāista Khān's predecessors.<sup>2</sup> In reply the factors stated that the *farmān* was at Surat and the *parwānas* at one of the other Bengal stations, and that therefore they could not guarantee their production within the ten days.<sup>3</sup> The factors' contention that the imperial *farmān* could not be produced because it was at Surat does not appear to be correct; for they had, in fact, obtained a copy of the *farmān* in 1668 but they had then refrained from showing it to the Nawwāb because there was the mention of the payment of customs in it.<sup>4</sup> A similar awareness of the weakness of their position vis-a-vis the earlier documents might have led them to give this evasive reply and to insist upon a wide construction of the *parwāna*. The difficulty was resolved for the time being, however, by the good sense of Joseph Hall, a member of the Bengal Council, who visited the governor with a "small present" towards the end of the month and obtained his permission for the goods to proceed towards Dacca and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

Things went on smoothly for a time. But soon the governor renewed his claim for customs on the imported goods.<sup>6</sup> The factors alleged in their correspondence with the home authorities that this he did because he wanted that the goods were sold to him at his own rates.<sup>7</sup> They also suspected that the trouble was instigated by the Dutch who paid in customs between 30,000 and 40,000 rupees a year, "as against an annual sum of Rs. 3,000 and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Bengal letter to Surat, 20 Oct. 1668, *E.F.I.*, 1668-69, p.166.

<sup>5</sup> 7 Hug. 27-29; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.348.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Fawcett refers to the governor's claim to customs in general terms suggesting that he was interfering with both the export and the import trade (*E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.346). But a careful perusal of even those documents that are summarised by him and specially a comparison of his texts at pages 348-349 leaves no room for doubt that the controversy arose over the import trade alone.

<sup>7</sup> 4 Hug. 5; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.335.

the usual small presents to the Governor and his officers, paid by the English".<sup>1</sup>

The allegation of the governor's desire to monopolize the import trade appears to be unfounded. There was no incentive for him to do so, for as yet there was no great demand in Bengal for the English goods. As the factors themselves admitted in their correspondence, they had to barter at Balasore, in default of sale, a large quantity of lead and broadcloth at a discount of 20 per cent., for gingham and other calicoes. They further stated that the English broad-cloth that had reached Patna via Agra had also no sale on account of the badness of the market there and at all other places in Bengal. Consequently the factors asked the Company to send no more broad-cloth for the next one or two years.<sup>2</sup> The real reason for the Hugli governor's interference with the import of goods by the Company was his strict construction of Shāista Khān's *parwāna* of 1669 and the previous grants which, according to him, did not apply to the import of goods. Besides this, he had probably also a specific ground for his action. The Emperor and the Nawwāb, we are told, had been in hostility with the local *rājās* and *zamindars* and had, for that reason, forbidden the disposal of lead and other military stores such as brimstone or ironguns brought by the foreign merchants except to themselves or by their leave.<sup>3</sup> In endeavouring to take an account of the goods imported by the English Malik Qāsim might have acted on such instructions.

Nor was the allegation of Dutch instigation well grounded; for about the same time Malik Qāsim and the Dutch fell out over a monetary transaction. The facts of the dispute were that Baburam, the chief Brahman of the Dutch at Hugli, had, as servant to the Dutch, borrowed a sum of Rs. 30,000 from Malik Qāsim. Baburam died suddenly. He also owed the Dutch a similar amount. The latter got hold of the widow of the deceased Baburam and forcibly realized from her a sum of Rs. 13,000. Two days afterwards the unfortunate woman died, either because of

<sup>1</sup> 4 Hug. 5-6; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.346.

<sup>2</sup> 4 Hug. 4; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.345.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the shame she felt, or because of the wounds she had sustained in being beaten. Malik Qāsim now took up the matter and forced the Dutch to pay an amount of Rs. 28,000 as part of the debt owed by the deceased Brahman to him.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch appealed to Nawwāb Shāista Khān against this action of Malik Qāsim. The English also now thought it timely to present their complaint to the Nawwāb against what they considered Malik Qāsim's unauthorized interference with their trade, and to join the Dutch in their endeavour to oust Malik Qāsim from his post. Accordingly they also presented their case before the Nawwāb.<sup>2</sup> On receipt of these complaints Shāista Khān summoned Malik Qāsim to Dacca where he arrived towards the end of April (1672). The Nawwāb dealt with the two cases separately. So far as the case of the English was concerned he decided to stand by his commitment of allowing the English complete freedom of trade in lieu of their annual payment of the Rs. 3,000 as laid down in the *parwāna* of 1669. He realized however that the *parwāna* was vague and susceptible of different interpretations. Hence, in June 1672, he granted the English two new *parwānas*, one for "friendship" and the other for "free trade". The latter specifically mentioned the exemption of the English from the payment of customs on all goods imported into or exported from his dominions, ordered help to be given for the recovery of their loans, free passage of the boats owned or hired by them, and prohibited all impediments or hindrance to their trade.<sup>3</sup> Malik Qāsim also agreed to pay back whatever amount he had received from the English on this account.<sup>4</sup> As regards the appeal of the Dutch, Shāista Khān decided the case in their favour, disapproving the action of Malik Qāsim and ordering for his removal from that place.<sup>5</sup> Thus Shāista Khān was just and consistent in his attitude towards the foreign traders. It also shows that he did not like Malik Qāsim's financial transactions with the Dutch.

The controversy with Malik Qāsim arose, as we have seen,

<sup>1</sup> E.F.I., 1670-77, p.347.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> 7 Hug. 74; E.F.I., 1670-77, p.349.

<sup>4</sup> Dacca letter, 24 June and 11 July 1672, 7 Hug. 77, 79; 3 Misc. 170; E.F.I., 1670-77, p.351.

<sup>5</sup> Dacca letter, 17 July 1672, 7 Hug. 81; *ibid.*

over the question of the import of goods in Bengal. There was no impediment to the Company's investment for and procurement of goods and these progressed as usual. The new governor of Hugli, 'Azīz Beg, was reported to be "very quiett and civill" and he assured the English of his help in their trade in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> At Kasimbazar "trade proceeded quietly," we are told, under the aid of a friendly governor, Moḥammad Murād.<sup>2</sup> The factors there duly received the various consignments of treasure sent up from Hugli.<sup>3</sup> They also raised "considerable" funds at interests or on bills of exchange, and sent "large sums" to Dacca and Patna.<sup>4</sup> At the former place the factors invested about 50,000 rupees in procuring goods, principally cloth, for that year's shipping.<sup>5</sup>

It was only at Patna, which was outside the jurisdiction of Shāista Khān, that there was some interference with the Company's free procurement of goods. There the Nawwāb, Ibrāhīm Khān, reportedly insisted upon both the Dutch and the English merchants to purchase from him a quantity of decayed saffron "at about double its real value." This the English factors were obliged to do before they could obtain the permits for despatching their goods to Hugli.<sup>6</sup> To avoid such interference in future Job Charnock, the Company's chief factor at Patna, suggested the necessity of sending "an able vauqeel" to the Mughal court for obtaining redress from the Emperor.<sup>7</sup> The Bengal council accepted the suggestion,<sup>8</sup> but no such appeal appears to have been made to the Emperor for the time being.

In spite of the inclement weather and the rather petty annoyance caused by the Nawwāb of Patna, the Company had a good business in Bengal during this year (1672). Between July and September as many as six ships, the largest number since the beginning of the English trade in Bengal, arrived at Balasore.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dacca letter, 24 July 1672, 7 Hug. 81-82; *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.352.

<sup>3</sup> Kasimbazar letter, 9 Feb., 14 March, 17 May and 9 Oct., 1672, 7 Hug. 33, 38, 60, 93; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.353.

<sup>4</sup> Kasimbazar letter, 10 April, 17 May, 6 & 29 Aug., 1672, 7 Hug. 58, 60, 83, 87; *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> 4 Hug. 8; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.352.

<sup>6</sup> Patna letter, 3 & 14 June and 19 Sept., 1672, 7 Hug. 66, 91-92; 4 Hug. 8-9; *ibid.*, p.353.

<sup>7</sup> 7 Hug. 93; *ibid.*, p.354.

<sup>8</sup> 4 Hug. 9; *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> These were the *Rebecca*, the *Johanna*, the *Loyal Merchant*, the *Berkeley Castle*, the *Anne* and the *Barnadiston*.

More significant than the number was the fact that one of these ships, the *Rebecca*, a vessel of 200 tons, sailed for the first time upto Hugli and safely returned with the goods to Balasore.<sup>1</sup> Regular sailing upto Hugli was not yet found suitable and the factors obtained additional sloops from Masulipatam for the transport of goods between Hugli and Balasore.<sup>2</sup> The factors experienced some difficulty in procuring sufficient goods to lade the unusually large number of ships, especially as another war with the Dutch had broken out (17 March 1672) and it was thought expedient to send the ships together for mutual assistance and support. The ships left Balasore about 20 December with cargoes valued at Rs. 547,7218.<sup>3</sup>

The third Anglo-Dutch war continued from 17 March 1672 to 9 February 1674. As in the case of the last war between the two nations, this time also the Nawwāb enforced neutrality within his dominions. As a result there was no loss to the Company on account of any capture by the Dutch, for whatever goods the English factors obtained from up-country, they kept these stored at Hugli.<sup>4</sup> During the continuance of the war, however, their trade operations were much hampered on account of the non-arrival of ships and the consequent dearth of capital. Under these circumstances the business of the English factors was confined from the beginning of 1673 to the middle of 1674 to the selling of the goods brought by the last ships and, with the sale proceeds and such other amount as they could locally raise, to procure goods, especially the Patna saltpetre, for any ships that might unexpectedly arrive.

During this troublous period, however, the factors were engaged in an unwholesome animosity with Malīk Qāsim, the former governor of Hugli. The latter, after his removal from Hugli, endeavoured to get the governorship of Balasore which

<sup>1</sup> E.F.I., 1670-77, p.342.

<sup>2</sup> 7 Hug. 53; *ibid.*, p.343.

<sup>3</sup> 4 Hug. 14, 16, 18, 20; *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Hugli letter, 31 March and Balasore letter, 28 December, 1674, 4 Hug. 177 and 23; *ibid.*, p.379.

had then fallen vacant. Although Shāista Khān's *parwāna* of 1672 had settled the point of dispute between Malīk Qāsim and the English factors, the latter could not overcome their misgivings about him. Hence they tried, in alliance with the Dutch, to prevent his coming as governor of Balasore.<sup>1</sup> Malīk Qāsim, however, succeeded in overcoming their opposition and in obtaining the post towards the end of 1672 though, on account of the fierce opposition of the Dutch, he could not join his new post till near the end of March 1673.<sup>2</sup> With such a background the relation between the English factors and Malīk Qāsim, now the administrator of the chief port on the Bengal coast, could not be expected to be cordial. On his arrival, however, Malīk Qāsim professed his friendliness. The English factors, on the other hand, did not give up their design to oust him from that place. Their attitude and manoeuvres in this respect are revealed in their communications to their masters and others in which they preferred a series of allegations against him. These communications have sometimes been incorrectly taken to reflect the Nawwāb's dealings with the foreign merchants.<sup>3</sup> Malīk Qāsim, however, rose equal to the occasion. He outmanoeuvred his adversaries who, before long, had to lament that he "hath the advantage of us in advices, having the kings' conveyance which goes in halfe the time that we can send, and the advantage of his own pen to represent to the Nabob all things in what colours he pleases."<sup>4</sup> In fact Malīk Qāsim emerged from the conflict stronger than ever. As against the intrigues of the English he not only maintained his position at Balasore, but also got control over Hugli by obtaining, in October 1674, the governorship of that place in favour of his son Malīk Zindī.<sup>5</sup>

The efforts of the factors to sell the goods brought by the ships in 1672 did not also meet with much success. This was so because there was practically no demand for the English goods,

<sup>1</sup> Dacca letter, 24 July 1672, 7 Hug. 81-82 and Balasore letter, 3 April 1673, 4 Hug. 49; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, pp.351 and 361.

<sup>2</sup> Balasore letter, 31 March, 1673, 4 Hug. 44; *ibid.*, p.360.

<sup>3</sup> See for details, *J.E.P.H.A.*, Vol.1, No.1, March 1968, pp.22-24.

<sup>4</sup> Balasore letter, 1 and 27 August 1673, 4 Hug. 75, 82; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77 p.362.

<sup>5</sup> Balasore letter, 7 Oct. & 28 Dec. 1674, 4 Hug. 8, 23; *ibid.*, p.377.

especially the broadcloth, in Bengal and other places. Both in 1673 and 1674 the factors stated that the Company's warehouses were full of cloth from Europe and the country merchants had so much of it on their hands that they would not take any more.<sup>1</sup> At Balasore Khemchand, a Hindu merchant, alone had rupees 3,000's worth. Some of the cloth, lead and copper plates were bartered to another merchant, Raghunath, for *muslins* to be delivered at Dacca.<sup>2</sup> At Hugli cloth had been lying "for several years and become damaged". As such the factor there was ordered to dispose of it for whatever he could get, or to try to barter it for saltpetre.<sup>3</sup> The Kasimbazar factory had been authorized to sell the goods at low rates to raise cash for its expenses;<sup>4</sup> while the Dacca factor (Elwes) was asked to get in all the goods remaining with the people to whom they had been distributed for sale and to send them down to Hugli where they were more warehousing facilities.<sup>5</sup> These facts once again reveal the untrustworthiness of the factors' allegations: there was really no incentive for Malik Qāsim to monopolize the business in the goods brought by the English Company, nor were the native merchants debarred from carrying on trade with the foreign merchants. In 1674 the market was further flooded by the goods captured by the Dutch who not only sold them at much cheaper rates, but also insultingly exhibited them as trophies of their victory.<sup>6</sup> Even for this dullness of the market the factors, in their usual fashion, found fault with the Nawwāb's government and attributed the lack of demand for the English goods to what they called the "parsimonious nature" of the Mughal officials, and reported to their masters that there was no hope of selling broadcloth, unless "some Young Nabob or a son of the Kings come to succeed in Nabob of Dacca."<sup>7</sup>

The dearth of sale of the English goods and the non-arrival of ships caused an acute shortage of funds for the factors. In consequence the investments at Dacca and Kasimbazar were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.358 and 372-373.

<sup>2</sup> Balasore letter., 3 March and 11 April, 1673, 4 Hug. 42, 49; *ibid.*, p.358.

<sup>3</sup> Bal. let., 27 June and 28 July 1673, 4 Hug. 66, 73; *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Hug. let., 22 Nov., 1673, 4 Hug. 93-94; *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Bal. let., 4 July and 28 Dec., 1674, 4 Hug. 131; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.472-372.

<sup>7</sup> 4 Hug. 121; *ibid.*, p.373.



suspended,<sup>1</sup> but, as saltpetre was badly needed in Europe all the available funds were diverted to Patna to keep up the saltpetre investments there. The cash position improved a little in the early months of 1674 when about half of the broadcloth brought by the ships (in 1672) had either been sold for cash or bartered for other goods, and about 170 tons of lead had been sold.<sup>2</sup> The factors also succeeded in raising by bills of exchange an amount of rupees 60,000.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime the war with the Dutch had ended on 9 February 1674 and three of the Company's ships, the *Advice*, the *Lancaster* and the *Phoenix*, arrived at Balasore between August and September, 1674. They brought with them goods and treasure worth 2,79,780 rupees (£ 27,978), besides permission to raise 2,00,000 (£ 20,000) on bills of exchange.<sup>4</sup> After the arrival of these ships the Dacca and Kasimbazar factors were instructed to resume their normal investments. Vincent at Kasimbazar was asked to supply a good quantity of raw silk, floretta yarn and black *taffatis*, whereas Elwes at Dacca was instructed to provide fine *cossaes* to the value of 15,000. And as the Company had forbidden to send home any more south Indian saltpetre, which was of an inferior quality, Job Charnock at Patna was encouraged to procure as much saltpetre as possible.<sup>5</sup>

The records of the period do not show any interference with the factors' investments for and procurement of goods at Dacca and Kasimbazar. During the first half of 1674 *humiums* (a thick stout cloth) and fine *muslins* from Dacca, *taffatis* and silk from Kasimbazar, and saltpetre and tincal (borax) from Patna were brought to Balasore.<sup>6</sup> It was only at Patna that the factors had come across some trouble. There a new Nawwâb had succeeded Ibrâhîm Khân towards the end of 1673. The new viceroy wrote to the Emperor that the English carried on an extensive trade at Patna but that they paid no customs. In reply the Emperor asked him to see that the state was not harmed in any way. Thereupon

<sup>1</sup> Bal. let., 16 March 1673 and Hug. let., 22 Nov 1673, 4 Hug. 35 & 94; *ibid.*, p.358.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.373.

<sup>3</sup> Hug. let., 31 March 1674, 4 Hug. 114; *ibid.*, p.382.

<sup>4</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.382.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p.374.

<sup>6</sup> Hug. let., 31 March 1674, 4 Hug. 120; *ibid.* p.373.

the viceroy called upon the English and the Dutch merchants to prove that they paid customs at Hugli.<sup>1</sup> The English factors thought that a reference to Nawwāb Shāista Khān for obtaining a customs clearance certificate might complicate the matter. Hence they "confined themselves to sending to Charnock a receipt, obtained with some difficulty from the governor of Hugli, for the annual payment of Rs. 3,000 that they had made for "many years past."<sup>2</sup> The Dutch, on the other hand, obtained a certificate from Nawwāb Shāista Khān to the effect that they paid customs regularly which amounted annually to 30,000 to 40,000 rupees.<sup>3</sup> In view, presumably, of this discrepancy between the Dutch and the English authentication of their respective cases the Patna authorities allowed the latter to move their saltpetre consignment to Hugli only on their undertaking to obtain, within four months, a *parwāna* from Nawwāb Shāista Khān showing that the customs on the goods had been paid.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the months of October and November 1674 five of the Company's small vessels were busy in lading the ships with the goods obtained from Patna, Dacca and Kasimbazar.<sup>5</sup> The ships left Balasore on 17 December 1674 with cargoes valued at rupees 246,248.<sup>6</sup>

As noted earlier,<sup>7</sup> the trouble at Patna in 1672 had induced Charnock to urge upon the Bengal Council the necessity for obtaining a *farmān* from the Emperor. The demands of the new viceroy of Patna in 1674 further emphasized Charnock's plea. Hence, inspite of their having received no permission from the Madras Council to do so, Clavell and his council in Bengal authorized Charnock to send a *wakīl* to the Emperor's court.<sup>8</sup> Further progress of the negotiations was stopped, however, on account of the death of the *wakīl* in the middle of 1675.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile efforts were made to obtain a customs clearance

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp.374-375.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.375.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.368.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.369.

<sup>7</sup> *Supra.* p. 477.

<sup>8</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77., p.375. The Company in its despatch of 13 March 1674 disapproved the proposal to send a *wakīl* to the Mughal court. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>9</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.395.

certificate from Shāista Khān who issued it in the month of September 1675.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the investments for 1675 progressed as usual in Bengal as well as at Patna. In July and August five ships, the *Anne*, the *Loyal Subject*, the *Success*, the *Unity* and the *Samuel and Henry* arrived at Balasore.<sup>2</sup> The clearance-certificate granted by Shāista Khān in September appears to have removed the trouble at Patna, for there is no mention of any interference with the despatch of goods from that place.<sup>3</sup> Already by the end of August fifteen boats laden with Patna saltpetre arrived at Hugli.<sup>4</sup> By 20 September 14,000 *maunds* of Patna saltpetre had been received at Hugli, and a further 5,500 *maunds* were ready at Patna.<sup>5</sup> By the end of November all the goods sent by Charnock were received at Balasore.<sup>6</sup> About the same time goods worth rupees 87,418 were also received from Kasimbazar.<sup>7</sup> With these goods the ships left Balasore sometime in December 1675.

The stock brought by the ships in 1675 was stated to be £ 2,000 less than what the Company had intended for the Bengal factories.<sup>8</sup> Obviously a larger amount was kept at Madras by the Agent and Council there. Yet, what the ships brought was presumably sufficient for the investment of 1676, for in that year not much was heard about the shortage of funds. The chief interest of the year centered round the proceedings of Streynsham Master whom the Company had commissioned to investigate the various irregularities in the Bengal factories, especially in the squabbles and quarrels between Clavell, Hall and Vincent. For sometimes past these servants of the Company in Bengal had been engaged in bitter conflicts and quarrels with one another over private trade affairs, over the maintenance of the Company's

<sup>1</sup> Bal. let., 29 Sept. 1675, 4 Hug. 73; *ibid.*, p.395.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.389.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Fawcett, however, refers to the obstruction of the Company's trade by the Mughal officials (*E.F.I.* 1670-77, p.395). A comparison of the first and third paras of his text at the same page makes it clear, however, that this "obstruction" had reference to the non-payment of the "Gautbarra" (*Ghar Bhara* or *pieage*) at the rate of rupees two per boat.

<sup>4</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p.390.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.393.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.392.

<sup>8</sup> Bal. let., 29 Sept., 1675, 4 Hug. 73; *ibid.* pp.391.

accounts, and over the question of their seniority and precedence in the Bengal Council. Master arrived in Bengal by one of the three ships, the *Eagle*, the *Falcon* and the *Surat Merchant*, which arrived at Balasore on 23 August 1676.<sup>1</sup> Master's proceedings, as recorded by himself,<sup>2</sup> reveal two sets of information which reflect sufficiently on the factors' activities in Bengal as well as on their relation with the local authorities. In one set of information regarding mainly the trade of the company, it is recorded, *inter alia*, that the local merchants were loath to deal with the Company "because of the broadcloth and lead they were forced to take in part payment, complaining of the great quantities that were lying on their hands."<sup>3</sup> This fact once again confirms that there was no appreciable demand for the English goods and that the slowness of their sale was not really due to the obstruction by Malīk Qāsim or other Mughal officials. The local merchants were not debarred from dealing in the goods imported by the English on account of any official's intention to monopolize them. On the contrary, it was the factors who "forced" the local merchants to accept the English goods in part payment of the merchandise supplied to the latter. The highhandedness and irregular dealings of the English factors are all the more evident from the other set of information which, but for the personal bickerings of the factors themselves, would not probably have come to light. These pieces of information show that the chief of a factory occasionally resorted to beating and confinement of the local people in order to force them to fulfil their contract of supplying goods or to extract repayment of the money taken as advance or loan.<sup>4</sup> Such oppression sometimes exceeded its limits and the victim succumbed to his injuries. One of the major issues with which Master himself was to deal was the case of such a victim, Raghu Poddar, who died on account of excessive beating at the instance or connivance of Vincent, the factory chief at Kasimbazar. The actual beating was done by Anantaram, the factory broker. Master thought that such application of physical force in order to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.400. Earlier, on 31 July, another ship, the *Johanna*, had arrived at Balasore.

<sup>2</sup> *Diaries of Streyntsham Master*, 2 vols., London, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> *Master's Diary*, Vol.I. pp.303-304.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.345, 346, 348, 350, 351, 353, 358, 371.

enforce contracts was justified by "the custom of the country" although there is very little evidence to support such an opinion. He also exonerated Vincent of complicity in the matter because no direct evidence to that effect was available.<sup>1</sup> But what is more noteworthy is that Master approved of Vincent's action in not handing over Anantaram to the local authorities to be dealt with by them and otherwise in hushing up the affair at the cost of rupees 13,000 for, as Vincent argued, a reference to the local authorities might have involved the factors in further expenses and trouble.<sup>2</sup>

This attitude of excluding the interposition of the local authorities in matters which legitimately fell within their jurisdiction also underlay the factor's handling, in the same year, of another case known as the "De Soito Business".<sup>3</sup> The case had its origin in 1652 in which year a Portuguese merchant at Hugli named Gomes de Soito had consigned to Persia a parcel of cinnamon on the Company's ship, the *Mayflower*. The Portuguese merchant died a little afterwards. His son, Pasqual, alleged that the goods had been sold for rupees 6,000 but that the English factors had not paid him the money excepting a sum of rupees 500 which was paid in 1657. After repeated unsuccessful efforts to realize the amount he applied, at last, to Nawwāb Shāista Khān in November 1675, for realizing the money. The *qādī*, to whom the case had been referred decided, in April 1676, in favour of Pasqual and awarded him rupees 5,300. "This conclusion," as Fawcett points out, "was quite a reasonable one;"<sup>4</sup> yet the factor at Dacca, Harvey, represented to the Chief at Hugli that if the decision of the *qādī* was allowed to stand, "there was an imminent prospect that other similar claims would be made against the Company".<sup>5</sup> Accordingly Harvey was authorized to adopt such methods and to spend such amount as he thought fit to settle the matter.<sup>6</sup> By "extensive bribery" of the Nawwāb's officials, costing over

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.153-54. See *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, pp.402-404 for a good summary of the case.

<sup>2</sup> *Master's Diary*, Vol.I., pp.344, 345, 346-47, 350-51, 353-54, 358-59, 367.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, pp.413-14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.414.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

rupees 9,000 (about double the amount awarded by the *qāḍī* in favour of Pasqual), Harvey succeeded in getting an order from the Nawwāb in June 1676 for a reexamination of the case at Balasore, "where the Company's influence was greater than at Dacca."<sup>1</sup> The matter appears to have been subsequently settled by the payment of rupees 1,000 to Pasqual.<sup>2</sup> The cases of Raghu Poddar and the "De Soito Business" show that the English factors' conduct of business was not always regular, that they were therefore eager to exclude the jurisdiction of the local authorities for fear of enquiry into their other irregular activities, and that in order to secure the latter end they did not even hesitate to conceal a crime or to influence the course of the administration of justice. Incidentally, the preference shown for Balasore to Dacca for settling the "De Soito Business" also suggests that Malik Qāsim's governorship at Balasore had not after all jeopardized the position of the English at the place.

Although Master's investigations engrossed the attention of the factors, the procurement of goods for the ships progressed as usual. By the beginning of November goods from the different factories—saltpetre from Patna, *taffatis* and turmeric from Kasimbazar and cloth from Dacca were collected and brought down to Hugli for their despatch to Balasore. At that stage the factors appear to have attempted to make good whatever time was lost in course of Master's proceedings by hastily despatching the boats to Balasore without proper passes. In fact John Byam, a senior writer of the factory at Hugli, went to the length of using force in an attempt to despatch a boat though it had no valid pass.<sup>3</sup> At this Malik Zindī, the governor of the place, stopped the passage of the Company's boats and also imprisoned some of the employees of the factory. He also demanded, presumably by way of a fine, a sum of rupees 500 over and above the usual yearly present of rupees 3,000.<sup>4</sup> In view of this difficulty the Bengal Council

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 422-23. For a detailed account of the affair see Richard Temple's "Story of the Mayflower and her cargo", *Master's Diary*, Vol. I., pp. 17-86.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 408; also *Master's Diary*, Vol. II., pp. 43-44.

<sup>4</sup> *Master's Diary*, Vol. II., pp. 43-44. Master, however, vaguely refers to the affair and, without specifying any reason for Malik Zindī's action, states that he "endeavoured all he could to =

decided, on November 11, to mollify the governor. They sent him a small present of "five half-pieces of broadcloth" and ultimately succeeded in getting a withdrawal of the stoppage of the boats and the release of the persons who had been detained.<sup>1</sup> The council also fined Byam of rupees 100 for his unseemly conduct.<sup>2</sup> Though Malīk Zindī dropped the claim for the additional sum of rupees 500 and let the Company's boats go, he demanded, a few days afterwards, an immediate payment of the yearly present of rupees 3,000. It was not before he imprisoned the factory *wakīl* and stopped further passage of the boats that the factors gave in and made the payment on 2 December.<sup>3</sup>

A real trouble for the factors was a directive from Emperor Aurangzeb, received about that time by Shāista Khān, for the levy of customs at 2 per cent on all the Company's goods.<sup>4</sup> The practice of their trading custom-free in Bengal in lieu of the yearly payment of rupees 3,000 was an arrangement made between the Nawwāb and the factors. Obviously the Emperor was unaware of this. Hence his orders for the levy of customs were not unnatural. The matter had really originated from the Patna viceroy's report about the Company's trade in those parts of the empire and the consequent sending of a *wakīl* by the factors to the Imperial court for obtaining a fresh *farmān*. Be that as it may, Shāista Khān, who had been strictly adhering to his *parwāna* of 1669 in dealing with the English Company, was somewhat unnerved on receipt of the Imperial orders. He immediately issued instructions to the governors of Hugli and Balasore for giving effect to the imperial orders.<sup>5</sup> Fytch Nedham, the factor who was then in charge of the Dacca factory, succeeded by bribing the Nawwāb's officials in stopping the despatch of the instructions for the levy of customs for seven days. As a result they were received by Mālīk Zindī on the 15th of December, although originally they were ready for

= molest us and impede the Honourable Company's business by stopping our boats and seizing our goods and servants and detaining them." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; also *E. I. L.*, 1670-77, p. 409.

<sup>4</sup> *Master's Diary*, Vol. II., pp 68-69.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

despatch on the 3rd.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Master and the Bengal Council sent, on 11 December, three good Persian horses as present to the Nawwāb, thinking that the trouble was probably due to the failure to give him the presents he had long been promised.<sup>2</sup> Master also represented to the Company the urgent need for obtaining an Imperial *farmān* confirming the privileges under which the Company had been trading in Bengal.<sup>3</sup> The respite provided by Nedham's action had, however, enabled the factors at Hugli to despatch sufficient quantity of goods to Balasore; and the four ships were laden with those goods and were sent off from Balasore on 21 and 31 December.<sup>4</sup>

The Imperial orders for the levying of customs did not therefore affect the shipping of goods for 1676. Immediately on receipt of the instructions to levy customs, we are told, Malik Zindī refused to allow further transshipment of goods to Balasore; and for the first few months of 1677 he continued to insist upon the payment of customs and put various pressures upon the factors, besides detaining their goods.<sup>5</sup> As this was the first half of the year during which the factors were principally engaged in making investments rather than in collecting goods and sending them down to Balasore, whatever goods that Malik Zindī was said to have detained were really those that were left over at Hugli after the ships had left Balasore towards the end of the last year. In view, however, of the difficulties with which the Company's trade in Bengal was now beset, the Madras Council approved, in February 1677, of Master's suggestion to obtain a new *farmān* from the Emperor and authorized Clavell and his Council in Bengal to adopt the course they thought best to procure it.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the Bengal Council also sent a representation to Shāista Khān. This elicited a favourable response. He referred the question back to the Emperor, probably informing him in detail about the circumstances of the English Company's trade in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Hug. 2: *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> *Master's Diary*, Vol I., p. 399 and Vol II., pp. 45, 68, 73, 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol I., pp. 490-95.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol II., pp. 70, 90-92, 93, 109.

<sup>5</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 417.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.



Bengal and, on 5 May 1677, also issued orders to all his officers asking them to suspend the levy of customs till the Emperor's further instructions on the matter were received.<sup>1</sup>

The Nawwāb's orders brought to an end the complications that had been caused by the Imperial directive. Thus at Kasimbazar, which had already sent down to Hugli a large quantity of goods obtained against last year's investment, a fresh contract had been made for the supply of 280 bales of silken goods within the year of 1677.<sup>2</sup> The treasures sent to the mint were also received back, "without interruption," after they had been converted into "large sums in rupees and gold mohurs" so that by April and May the factors were able to repay the money that had been borrowed at interest.<sup>3</sup> Similarly progress was made also in the saltpetre investment at Patna. There Charnock was supplied with a cash of rupees 1,000 from Kasimbazar and also a letter of credit for whatever amount he needed.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently he also drew a bill for rupees 1,850 on Hugli which was accepted in June.<sup>5</sup> The Dacca factory locally borrowed rupees 10,000 in order to carry on its investments.<sup>6</sup>

Between 27 July and 3 September three ships, the *Bengal Merchant*, the *Caesar* and the *New London*, arrived at Balasore.<sup>7</sup> The Company had sent out for the Bengal factories £ 55,000 in bullion and £ 17,334 in goods.<sup>8</sup> Most of the treasures and goods were sent up to Hugli and thence to Kasimbazar, Patna and Dacca for sale and investments.<sup>9</sup> As in the last year, this year also Malīk Zindī demanded an early payment of the yearly present of rupees 3,000. The factors paid the amount in order to avoid any stoppage of their boats.<sup>10</sup>

The bulk of the treasure sent up to Kasimbazar was meant for

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kas. 12, 13, 16, 18; entries of 8 & 12 April, 5 May and 7 June; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kas. 7-8; *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kas. 12, 13, 16, 18; *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> 1 Hug. 20; *ibid.*, p. 423.

<sup>6</sup> *Dac. let.*, 24 Aug. 1677, 7 Hug. 13; *ibid.*, p. 421.

<sup>7</sup> The three ships arrived at Balasore respectively on 27 July, 19 August and 3 September.

<sup>8</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 424.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 424, 425, 427.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Hug. 34; entries of 7 & 9 Oct., *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 428.

the Patna factory for investment there, for the Company had raised their demand for saltpetre from 600 to 1000 tons.<sup>1</sup> The investments at the different factories were somewhat hampered by the difficulty in selling the treasure. This was due to the fact that the Emperor had imposed in 1677 a mintage of 5 per cent on all private persons who wanted to have their treasures minted at the royal mints.<sup>2</sup> On account of this new charge the merchants were unwilling to buy the treasure. They were also unwilling to accept *cruzados* (a kind of Portuguese coins), which formed a great part of the treasures brought by the ships in 1677, because it was difficult to convert them into the local coins.<sup>3</sup> The factors indeed applied to the Nawwāb's as well as the Emperor's *dīwāns* at Dacca (Rai Nandalal and Hajī Shafī Khān respectively) to get the Company exempted from the mintage; but these officers expressed their inability to do so unless such exemption was granted by the Emperor.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless the factors succeeded in having all the gold and silver, sent from Kasimbazar to Rajmahal, minted into gold mohurs and rupees.<sup>5</sup> It is not known whether the mintage was paid. Sales of treasure also took place from time to time.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the question of the mintage, two administrative changes carried out during the latter part of the year (1677) had further unsettling effects upon the Company's affairs in Bengal. The one was the appointment of Sultān Muḥammad A'zam, the Emperor's third son, as the viceroy of Bihar with its headquarters at Patna, and the other was the recall of Shāista Khān from Bengal. Prince A'zam replaced the old incumbent at Patna sometime in August.<sup>7</sup> He appears to have arrived at Patna with the knowledge of the Emperor's orders for the levy of customs from the English merchants. Immediately on his arrival he took steps to give effect to these orders. His *dīwan* refused to allow the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>2</sup> I. Kas. 10; *ibid.*, p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 435, 436. *Bengal and Madras Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 49, 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Dac. let.*, 24 Aug. : 11, 22 & 27 Oct.; and 16 Nov., 1677, 7 Hug. 11, 13, 30, 34, 38, *Bal. let.*, 4 January, 1678, *B.M.P.*, Vol. I, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> *E.F.L.*, 1670-77, p. 435.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 423.

despatch of the saltpetre boats for Hugli as also the bringing in of treasure to Patna until customs were paid on them.<sup>1</sup> It was only after the payment of a sum of rupees 1,200 to the *dīwān* and his assistant as deposit of customs at 3 per cent pending the receipt of the Emperor's reply to a reference made to him on the subject, that a compromise was made whereby the saltpetre boats were allowed to be sent down to Hugli.<sup>2</sup> Similarly treasure was also allowed to be brought to Patna subject to the production of the receipt for the payment of customs in Bengal. This requirement was met by producing, in December, the receipt from the governor of Hugli for the last annual present of rupees 3,000.<sup>3</sup>

The recall of Shāista Khān, which the factors came to know in September, naturally caused an apprehension among them about the attitude of the succeeding viceroy towards their trading privileges. They restricted further advances to the weavers at Kasimbazar<sup>4</sup> and, in the meantime, endeavoured to obtain a fresh *parwāna* from Shāista Khān regarding their freedom of trade.<sup>5</sup> Shāista Khān was very busy at that time and he did not grant any new *parwāna*. He left Dacca in December 1677.

In spite of these setbacks, the supply of goods from different factories was satisfactory. Altogether Charnock had sent 8,548 bags containing 15,468 *maunds* of saltpetre from Patna;<sup>6</sup> whereas the Kasimbazar factory provided nearly 400 bales of silk, besides a proportionate quantity of *taffatis*.<sup>7</sup> Similarly the Hugli factory supplied most of the *malmals* and *rumals* contracted for; and the Balasore factory supplied the desired quantity of calicoes.<sup>8</sup> It was only the Dacca factory, where the factors' time was mostly engaged in negotiation at the Nawwāb's court, which provided only 3,000 pieces of *cossacs* and *malmals* as against 13,000 required by the Company.<sup>9</sup> All these goods were safely brought

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 430, 435.

<sup>2</sup> *B.M.P.*, Vol. I., pp. 13-14, 7 Hug. 26-27; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 431.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, pp. 436-37.

<sup>4</sup> *B.M.P.*, Vol. I., p. 34; Kas. let., 24 Nov. 1677, 7 Hug. 51; Hug. let., 28 Nov. 1677, 4 Hug. 40; *ibid.*, p. 438.

<sup>5</sup> *B.M.P.*, Vol. I., p. 26; *ibid.*, p. 441.

<sup>6</sup> *B.M.P.*, Vol. I., p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34; Kas. let., 3 & 6 Oct. 1677, 7 Hug. 25; *E.F.I.*, 1670-77, p. 439.

<sup>8</sup> *B.M.P.*, Vol. I., pp. 11, 17, 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

down to Balasore and with these the three ships left the port on 25 and 29 December.

With the departure of Shāista Khān from Bengal and with the close of the year 1677 a peaceful and prosperous period of the Company's trade in Bengal came to an end. Nawwāb Shāista Khān had steadfastly adhered to his *parwāna* of 1669 in dealing with the English East India Company. When the governor of Hugli, Malik Qāsim, raised the point that the *parwāna* did not cover the import of goods by the factors into Bengal, Shāista Khān was good enough to interpret it in favour of the English and, in order to remove any doubt on this point, granted them a fresh *parwāna* specifically mentioning that both the export and import of goods by the English were to be exempted from the payment of any customs if only they paid the yearly *peshkash* of rupees 3,000. Even after this the English factors unreasonably carried on their animosity with Malik Qāsim and endeavoured to oust him from his new post as governor of Balasore. Their allegation that Malik Qāsim wanted to monopolize the goods brought by the Company is not true for, as the statements of the factors themselves indisputably show, the English goods had as yet no appreciable demand in Bengal and elsewhere and as such there could have been no incentive for Malik Qāsim or any other official for establishing a monopoly of those goods. On the contrary, the English goods were sometimes forcibly imposed on the local merchants by the factors as part-payment for the goods supplied to them.

During the period the factors were engaged in internecine quarrels and squabbles which reached such a point that the Company sent out Streynsham Master to enquire into their affairs. The records of Master's enquiry show further that the factors were not always very upright and regular in their dealings with those who carried on business with them. The factors used physical force in order to enforce the supply of goods by the local contractors and merchants which, on one occasion at least, resulted in the death of the victim. The factors also avoided and resisted adjudication by the local authorities of claims against them, and for that purpose, they even attempted to influence the

course of the administration of justice.

Towards the end of the period their increasing business at Patna attracted the attention of the governor of that place who raised the question of the payment of customs. It was at that time that the English factors began seriously to think about obtaining a fresh *farmān* which they ought to have done shortly after the accession of Aurangzeb. On being informed by the governor of Patna about the extensive trade of the English in the eastern part of his empire the Emperor issued orders, in 1676, for the levy of customs from them. For a time Shāista Khān decided to give effect to the Imperial orders, but, on being approached by the English, he referred the matter back to the Emperor for his further instructions and, in the meantime, allowed the English to continue to trade in Bengal in accordance with the terms of the *parwāna* of 1669. About the same time the English definitely decided to approach the Emperor in all seriousness for a new *farmān* confirming the privileges they had been enjoying in Bengal. Thus with the close of the year 1677 a new period in the history of the English Company's trade in Bengal began.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE FIRST ENGLISH WAR IN BENGAL

#### I: THE INTERVAL OF SHĀISTA KHĀN'S ABSENCE FROM BENGAL

Shāista Khān left Dacca on the 8th of December 1677. From that time till his return towards the end of 1679 two viceroys successively ruled in Bengal. The first was Fidā'ī Khān, an influential noble at Aurangzeb's court, who assumed the governorship of the province towards the end of January 1678 under the title of Nawwāb A'zam Khān.<sup>1</sup> He died, however, only after four months, on 24 May, and was succeeded by the Emperor's third son, Prince Sultān Muhammad A'zam, who remained in Bengal till 6 October 1679.

The Emperor had ordered, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> for the levy of customs at 2 per cent and a mint charge at 5 per cent. On this matter Shāista Khān had written to the Emperor on behalf of the English,<sup>3</sup> allowing them in the meantime to continue to trade according to their former privilege. No reply from the Emperor, however, was as yet received. The factors also had not taken any positive step for obtaining a *farmān* from the Emperor, although they were now convinced of the necessity for doing so.<sup>4</sup>

As an immediate step, however, they decided to apply to the new Nawwāb for a *parwāna* allowing them to continue their custom-free trade till a reply to the reference made to the emperor was received. As the hopes for obtaining such a *parwāna* diminished, and the Emperor's reply delayed, they became urgent in their endeavours to obtain an Imperial *farmān*. In the meantime they advised the factors at Dacca, Kasimbazar and Patna to be cautious in their investments.<sup>5</sup> It is to this curtailment or suspension of the investment that the factors frequently referred in their correspondence of the period as the "stoppage" of, or the

<sup>1</sup> Vincent and others to Charnock, Hugli, 16 Nov. 1677, *B.M.P.*, Vol. I., p. 58. Sir Jadunath Sarkar omits to mention the governorship of A'zam Khān and states that Shāista Khān was followed by Prince Muhammad A'zam. Cf. *History of Bengal*, Vol. II., D.U. 1948, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 487.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 488; also Vincent & others to Littleton, 17 November 1678, *B.M.P.*, Vol. I., p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 60.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent & others to Littleton, Hugli, 17 Nov., 1677, *ibid.*, p. 60. See also pp. 76, 89, 93.

"embargo" upon the Company's trade. It should be noted, however, that there was no stoppage or embargo as such by the local government. The Imperial orders meant, at the worst, that the English merchants could buy and sell goods freely only on the condition of paying the 2 per cent customs, as was done by the Dutch and others. There was also no occasion for the stoppage of the sale of goods imported by the English, for the goods and the treasure brought by the ships in the middle of 1677 had already been distributed to the different factories before the departure of Shāista Khān and the time for the collection and despatch of goods down to Hugli and Balasore for another shipment to Europe had not yet arrived.

During the first week of January 1678 the chief, Matthews Vincent, and other senior factors had been at Balasore where they had gone down in connection with the shipment of goods in December. Supposing, however, that the new Nawwāb had already arrived at Dacca they wrote to the factors there, Fytch Nedham, to see him, if he had not already done so, "with 7 or 9 mohurs and 15 rups.," and to desire "his favour to our business under his Government as ye Prince Sha Sujah and other Umbrahs had done before him;..."<sup>1</sup> Should the Nawwāb demand to see the records on which the factors' privilege was based, Nedham was to show him the *parwāna* obtained from Shāista Khān before the demand for customs was made by the Emperor. It is not known whether Nedham did present the new Nawwāb with 7 or 9 mohurs as directed. The chief and other factors, however, hurried back to Hugli towards the end of January and, on 11 February, they despatched Samuel Hervey<sup>2</sup> with presents to the Nawwāb and his *dīwān* along with several goods for sale at Dacca, all amounting to 36,532 rupees, 4 annas and 2 pice, "the gold alsoe being included."<sup>3</sup> Along with the goods for sale and for the

<sup>1</sup> Vincent & others to Nedham, 4 January 1678, *B.M.P.*, Vol.I., p.71.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hervey was the principal factor at Dacca. He had gone down to Balasore in connection with the shipping of the goods.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent & others to Hervey, Hugli, 11 Feb. 1678, *B.M.P.*, Vol.I., p.77. The present which Hervey was asked to give the Nawwāb included the following:

"Fine scarlet	2 p.
Coarse scarlet	9 p.

presents Hervey was given copies of important documents, such as Shāh Shujā's *nishān* and Shāista Khān's *parwāna* of 1669. The other relevant documents including the *parwāna* of 1672 were at Patna wherefrom they would be brought and sent to Hervey. He was instructed, however, to endeavour to obtain the new Nawwāb's *parwāna* by showing him only the document of 1672, the others "being all more strictly written".<sup>1</sup> In this connection the chief and council at Hugli appear to have been further mindful of the defect in the earlier documents, especially Shāh Shuja's *nishān* of 1651, which was, as noted above, obtained by a misrepresentation of the purport of the Imperial *farmān* of 1650, and which applied only to the overland transport of goods to the western coast and also required the payment of customs.<sup>2</sup> Shāh Shujā's *nishān* and the subsequent *parwānas* granted by the successive viceroys contained the phrase, "according to the King's *farmān*," while allowing the English their special privilege. A realization of this weakness of the English position prompted the Hugli chief and council to enjoin Hervey to spend two to four hundred rupees on the officer who would be writing the new

=	Fine green cloth	1 p.
	Violet colour cloth	1 p.
	Sky-coloured cloth	1 p.
	Broadcloth, ordared	13 p.
	Ditto green	7 p.
	Lookeing glasses of 40 $\frac{1}{2}$ inche pare	2 p.
	Ditto in frame, of 29 inche pare	1 p.
	An English clock	
	An Arabian horse	
	One paire of silk Persian Carpets of 11 covets long and 4 do broad	
	One paire of rich embroydered silk Persian Carpets 6 covets long and three covets broad.	
	Crimson Velvet	10 yds.
	Green do.	10 yds.
	Silver and gold lace, and several varities, you may give according to your discretion, of which, and of the rest of ye pieces, you are to sent us an accot as soone as perfected."	
As regards the Nawwāb's <i>diwān</i> Hervey was advised to present him:		
	"Fine scarlet	1 p.
	Broadcloth, ordared	3 p.
	Do. Green	2 p.
	Lookeing glasses. of 28 inches	1 p.
	About twenty or twenty-five yards of ye silver and gold lace and cloth toies, & c., to him and the several under-officers as you shall find a necessity to present, of all which as aforesaid you are to give us speedy and punctual advise."	

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p.78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



Nawwāb's *parwāna* in order to get the words "according to the King's phirmaund" changed into the words "according to the English use and customs in Bengal".<sup>3</sup> If this could be done, Hervey was reminded, "it will be of great importance to the preservation as well as continuance of our Masters' priviledges in these countries, especially if we should be soe unhappy (which God forbid) as not to be able to procure this King's phirmaund [*farmān*] for their conformation."<sup>4</sup>

Nawwāb A'zam Khān, on the other hand, decided to give effect to the Imperial orders for the levy of customs; and shortly after his arrival at Dacca he issued orders to that effect. These orders were received at Hugli on 12 February, just one day after Hervey had left for Dacca with the presents and the goods.<sup>2</sup> This development made the English all the more earnest in the matter of obtaining an Imperial *farmān* in their favour. Already on 9 February the Hugli chief and council had written about this matter to Job Charnock, the factor at Patna, asking him to send a *wakīl* to Delhi along with Shāista Khān who was at that time proceeding through that part of the country.<sup>3</sup> And now, on receipt of A'zam Khān's orders for the levy of customs, they wrote to Charnock two more letters, one on the 13th and the other on the 16th of February.<sup>4</sup> He was informed of the developments in Bengal and was asked to make haste in sending the *wakīl* to Delhi for which purpose the Hugli council also remitted to him, by a bill of exchange, a sum of rupees 20,000.<sup>5</sup> As in the case of their instructions to the Dacca factors, so the Hugli council also wrote to Charnock on 13 March to endeavour to remove all grounds of controversy regarding the English privilege by obtaining a better worded *farmān*, "Particularly where there is mentioned according to the King's phirmaund it might be altered and made according to y<sup>e</sup> English use and custome in these parts."<sup>6</sup> To do

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Vincent & others to Hervey, Hugli, 13 Feb. 1678, *B.M.P.*, Vol. I, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent & others to Charnock, Hugli, 9 Feb. 1678, *ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent & others to Charnock, Hugli, 13 and 16 Feb. 1678, *ibid.*, p. 79-80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent & others to Charnock, Hugli, 13 March, 1678, *ibid.*, p. 83.

this as well as to hasten the procurement of the *farmān* Charnock was further instructed to drive "a down-right bargain with Shausteh Caun, or any other powerful Umbraw" at the court.<sup>1</sup> Charnock could not, however, send the *wakīl* with Shāista Khān because the amount of rupees 20,000 sent for the purpose did not reach him till the first week of April.<sup>2</sup> Charnock appointed the *wakīl* as soon as he received the funds and despatched him to Delhi in the first week of May. On 18 May the Hugli council once again reminded Charnock to take special care about the wording of the *farmān* and to instruct the *wakīl* to get it written on the lines indicated above, even though this might involve an extraordinary expenditure, for "all future graunts of y<sup>e</sup> like sort, w<sup>ch</sup> we must have from every successive Emperor, will run in y<sup>e</sup> same words."<sup>3</sup>

The activities of the *wakīl* at Delhi are not known in detail. Simultaneously with the attempt to obtain an imperial *farmān* efforts were also continued at Dacca for getting a favourable *parwāna* from Nawwāb A'zam Khān. These efforts were, however, foiled by the machinations of the Dutch who, through their *wakīl* Gangaram, instigated the Nawwāb against the English. "Gungaram, ye treacherous lying villain," wrote Vincent, "doe as much hurt at Dacca, haveing by their [the Dutch] stories informed y<sup>e</sup> whole state of our business and soe exasperated him against us y<sup>e</sup> we have noe hopes of obtaining his Pwanna."<sup>4</sup>

In view, however, of the fast approaching time for the arrival of the ships from England the Hugli Council decided on 22 May 1678 to submit to the demand for the payment of customs on the conditions that (a) this undertaking was to be purely temporary, remaining in force only till the procurement of the imperial *farmān*, (b) that their *tālikā* or entires of the goods imported into or exported out of the country should be accepted and (c) that such customs should be levied only at the terminal ports of Hugli

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Vincent & others to Littleton, Hugli, 1 May 1678, *ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent and others to Charnock, 18 May 1678, *ibid.*, p.91. See also Vincent & others to Charnock, Dacca, 3 August 1678, *ibid.*, p.108.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent & others to Charnock, Hugli, 18 May 1678, *ibid.*, p.91.

and Balasore.<sup>1</sup>

Negotiations on the above mentioned lines could not be started, however, on account of the illness of the Nawwāb who, much to the relief of the English, died only two days afterwards, on 24 May 1678.<sup>2</sup>

On the death of Nawwāb A'zam Khān (Fidā'ī Khān) the Imperial *dīwān* Hājī Shafī Khān acted as viceroy until a permanent incumbent was sent by the Emperor.<sup>3</sup> He was reported to be favourably disposed towards the English. Accordingly the English council at Hugli wrote to Hervey for obtaining a *parwāna* from him by giving an undertaking that an Imperial *farmān* in favour of the English would be produced "within seven months' time", or else they would pay customs, but on the basis of *their* lists of goods imported into or exported out of the country.<sup>4</sup> They also instructed the factors at Dacca and Kasimbazar to "proceed carefully and cautiously" in making investments for cloth and silk at the two places respectively. It appears that the time prayed for by the English was granted by the *dīwān*. In any case the latter was in charge of the administration for only two months. On 29 July 1678 Prince Muḥammad A'zam Shāh, Aurangzeb's son, came to Dacca as the new viceroy. The latter's tenure of office was also very short; he left Bengal early in October of the following year.<sup>5</sup> According to later Assamese tales the prince is stated to have "simply roamed about hunting on horseback",<sup>6</sup> while the English, in their usual way, reported that he was "wholly addicted to his pleasures, without minding anything."<sup>7</sup> Whatever may be the truth, the position of the European traders, specially the English, did not undergo any change during this one year, nor is there any specific mention of the payment of customs by them. Presumably they managed their affairs under the promise to obtain a *farmān* from the emperor.

<sup>1</sup> Vincent & others to Hervey, Hugli, 22 May 1678, *B.M.P.*, Vol. I, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Vincent & others to Charnock, Hugli, 31 May 1678, *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent & others to Hervey, Hugli, 1 June 1678, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Master's Diary*, Vol. II, p. 268. The prince left Dacca, according to Master, "on the 6th, and on the 12th began his journey towards Rajmahal."

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Jadunath Sarkar in *HB.II*, p. 382.

<sup>7</sup> *Master's Diary*, Vol. II, p. 243 n.

II: SHĀISTA KHĀN'S SECOND TERM OF VICEROYALTY:  
THE FIRST ENGLISH WAR IN BENGAL

Prince Muhammad A'zam was recalled by Aurangzeb to join him in the Deccan and Shāista Khān came to Bengal for a second term of office which lasted from October 1679 to June 1688. During this period the English East India Company's agents, failing to establish their claim to the privilege of custom-free trade, had recourse to a war upon the Mughals—a course which they had in fact been contemplating since the time of Mīr Jumla.<sup>1</sup> The main causes of their increasing aggressiveness during this period have already been indicated earlier in this chapter.<sup>2</sup> Here the sequence of developments may be briefly noted.

When Shāista Khān returned to Bengal in October 1679 the *wakīl* sent by the English to Aurangzeb's court in May of the previous year had not yet succeeded in obtaining any *farmān* from the emperor. Shāista Khān was, however, fully aware of the developments. It was he who, prior to his departure from Bengal in 1677, had suspended giving effect to the emperor's orders for the levy of customs, making a reference to the latter for a reconsideration of the matter. The sending of the *wakīl* to Aurangzeb's court was only a sequel to this development. Hence, consistently with his previous policy, Shāista Khān now granted a temporary *parwāna* to the English allowing them to trade custom-free for the year 1680 during which period, it was expected, the much awaited imperial *farmān* would be obtained. As a result the English faced no difficulty in procuring and despatching their goods that year; but their expectation of getting a *farmān* according as they desired was not realized. A *farmān* was indeed obtained by the *wakīl* in 1680; but it did not exempt the English from payment of customs.<sup>3</sup> Presumably the emperor did not see any reason to discriminate between the English and the other European nations like the Dutch and the Portuguese who continued to pay the usual customs without making any fuss or objections about them. He might have also realized that his father

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp. 393-394.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 456-457.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1678-84, p.230. The *farmān* imposed a 3½% customs on the English.

Shāh Jahān's *farmān* of 1650 on which the subsequent orders of the Bengal viceroys (Prince Shujā', Mīr Jumla and Shāista Khān) were based, did indeed require the English to pay customs duties at the ports. As noted above, the English were well aware of their weakness in this regard. They knew that the *farmān* of 1650 contained the provision for the payment of customs; they were equally aware of the fact that Shāh Shujā's *nishān* of 1651 was obtained by a "stratagem". Accordingly they attempted to relate their claim no longer to these two above mentioned basic documents, but to what they conceived as their continued practice. Hence they had specifically advised the *wakīl* so to have the desired *farmān* worded as would change the phrase "according to the king's *farmān*" into the words "according to the English use and custome in Bengal".<sup>1</sup> Even this attempt at establishing a claim for a sort of customary privilege was not well-based. There is of course a rule in English law as in other systems of law that continued and undisputed usage or practice over a long period of time gives rise to a prescriptive claim in support of that usage or practice. But the English position in Bengal was different from that. What they had obtained "by stratagem" from Prince Shujā' in 1651 was interpreted by subsequent viceroys as an undertaking to pay a consolidated yearly customs of 3,000 rupees, which the English continued to pay more or less regularly during Mīr Jumla's time and the first term of Shāista Khān's viceroyalty. Both these viceroys had also told the English that whatever privilege they had obtained during Shāh Jahān's reign needed to be reconfirmed by the succeeding emperor, Aurangzeb. In their communications with the local authorities as well as among themselves the English traders admitted this. No 'usage' as such of a custom-free trade in favour of the English had thus come into existence for any length of time. Nor was such a claim supported by the practice of their other countrymen, whom they called "interlopers", not to speak of the other European traders. Obviously the English Company's agents were aware of this weakness too on their part; so that instead of making a

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 497.

straightforward claim for a customary privilege they attempted to import such a meaning, rather surreptitiously, in the *farmān* that they sought to obtain from the emperor, for which purpose they even instructed their *wakīl* to "strike a downright bargain" with any powerful noble at court.

The English could consistently claim that the practice of paying annually a consolidated amount of 3,000 rupees was rather well-established and that therefore the demand for the payment of customs at the usual rate was a departure from that practice. But then their attempt to avoid the payment of any customs was not a reaction to this new demand. From the very beginning of their trade in Bengal they were intent upon not paying any customs, although the other European traders followed a different policy. Indeed it is this attitude of the English Company which distinguishes them from all the other European traders in Bengal at that time including the English free-traders. It is precisely this attitude which led the English Company's agents first to take the rather dubious step of obtaining a *nishān* from Prince Shujā' by a misrepresentation of the purport of Shāh Jahān's *farmān* of 1650, and later on to persuading themselves, inspite of their annual payments of 3,000 rupees over the years, that they had established a 'usage' of custom-free trade for them in Bengal. The same attitude, again, determined their reaction to the *farmān* of 1680; for now that it contained a definite provision for levying customs from the English, they now came forward with the rather strange claim that the *farmān* did not apply to Bengal,<sup>1</sup> although, as noted above, they had taken all the steps to procure it specifically for Bengal.

Thus the English Company's representatives were consistent in their objective, though not so in their talks, and they knew well what they attempted to obtain. Hence, far from being discouraged by the rather unfavourable *farmān* of 1680, and in view of the increasing profits of their Bengal trade during the seventies, the Company decided in 1681 not only to increase their investment from £ 100,000 to £ 150,000, but also to set their

<sup>1</sup> E.F.I., 1678-1684; *Hedges' Diary*, Vol.I, pp.33-62, 91-101.

Bengal factories on a separate footing, independent of the authorities at Madras, and with an "Agent" and a "Council" of their own. The step was also called for, to some extent, by the need to check the activities of the English free-traders, called "interlopers", who began to appear on the Bengal coast in the seventies in an increasing number, and also to check the large-scale private trade operations of the factors themselves, often in collusion with the interlopers. In fact Matthias Vincent, the Company's chief factor in Bengal from 1677 to 1682, was himself in league with the "Pirate Pitt" for carrying on private trade at the cost of the Company. As mentioned already,<sup>1</sup> in order to cover up their private trade and other similar irregularities, the factors often gave exaggerated or even false accounts of what they called the "exactions" and "oppressions" of the Nawwāb and his officials. It is to be noted that in fact since 1677 the English factors had suspended even the payment of the annual amount of 3,000 rupees on the ground of their efforts, then under way, to obtain a favourable *fārmān* from the emperor, and that their records do not show any specific payment, either regular or irregular, having been made to the local authorities during the period from 1677 to 1680. In the latter year Vincent even began to issue "passes" on a large scale to local merchants, said to be dealing with the Company, and to the Company's servants engaged in private trade, in order to enable them to avoid the payment of customs on their goods. This practice caused some trouble with the *faujdār* of Murshidabad, Rāi Balchānd. Nevertheless Vincent and his colleagues appear to have succeeded in persuading Shāista Khān not to give an immediate effect to the *fārmān* of 1680 and to make a second reference to the emperor about the English.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, there is no mention of the payment of either the 3,000 rupees or the usual customs for that year (1681) also.

The year 1682 was a definite turning point in the history of the English trading in Bengal. In that year the Bengal factories attained an independent footing and William Hedges, one of the Directors of the Company, came to Bengal and replaced Vincent

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp.453-454.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1678-1684, pp.257, 362.

as their "Agent" or "Governor" in the Bay of Bengal. "His residence was fixed at Hugli" and, as Stewart puts it, "in order to give dignity to the office, a guard of a corporal and twenty European soldiers was sent from Fort St. George, for his protection."<sup>1</sup> Stewart's explanation about the arrival of the soldiers is rather equivocal, for he starts by saying that they were intended "to give dignity to the office" and then ends up by stating "for his protection". Why should the newly appointed chief be in need of "protection" by European soldiers is not understandable. There is however no ambiguity about the significance of the measure, and to quote Stewart again, this "was the first military establishment of the company in Bengal and the foundation of the English power in that country."<sup>2</sup> Hedge's arrival was also marked by a further increase in the amount of the English investment in Bengal from £ 150,000 of the previous year to £ 230,000.<sup>3</sup>

In April of the same year Emperor Aurangzeb's definite orders in reply to the reference made to him were received at Dacca, imposing 3½ p.c. customs on all goods of the English company. Thereupon Shāista Khān's officials, under instructions from him, refused to pass the English goods without the payment of customs. In view of this development and the need to load and despatch the ships before the year was out Hedges went to Dacca and, after making a "present" to Shāista Khān,<sup>4</sup> managed to secure a *parwāna*, in November (1682), suspending the payment of customs for seven months, but on the security of Gulabrai, a Dacca merchant, and on the undertaking that a favourable *farmān* from the emperor would be obtained within that period. Under this arrangement the English ships sailed away with the goods at the end of 1682 and early in 1683 without paying any customs.

No effective steps were taken by Hedges, however, to procure the *farmān* within the stipulated time. It was subsequently alleged that Hedges had made an arrangement with Shāista

<sup>1</sup> Stewart, *op. cit.*, p.339.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See *supra*, p.452.

<sup>4</sup> E.F.I., 1678-1684, p.351.



Khān promising to pay him rupees 40,000, "if he secured a custom-free *farmān*, of which sum about half had been paid in advance."<sup>1</sup> This seems very improbable, for in view of the emperor's definite orders and the ineffectiveness of his own previous communications on behalf of the English, it would be unlikely on Shāista Khān's part to enter into such a bargain with Hedges. On the other hand, the latter's private trade and other irregularities for which he was dismissed only two years afterwards would indicate that the story was made up to cover some of his irregular dealings. Had Shāista Khān entered into such an agreement, there would not have been the need for Gulabrai to stand security for the English Company. Moreover, after Hedges's dismissal in 1684 the English factor at Dacca, Pownsett, who had all along been connected with the negotiations there, categorically stated that "the Nawab had only two presents from them since his return to Bengal, one in 1680 and other from Hedges in 1682."<sup>2</sup> Pownsett does not mention any other payment having been made to Shāista Khān.

In any case, the *farmān* was not obtained within the stipulated time which expired in June 1683. When therefore the ships arrived for that year Hedges once again attempted to patch up the matter. He deposited an amount of 20,000 rupees with Gulabrai and made an agreement with Rāi Balchānd, the customs superintendent at Hugli, that customs would be paid if the desired *farmān* was not obtained by the time the ships sailed, i.e., early in 1684.<sup>3</sup> As the *farmān* was not obtained even by March 1684, Gulabrai made a payment of 8,485 rupees "for customs on goods worth Rs. 242,419, for which Hedges had signed entries in the previous December and January .... Later on, towards the end of June, Gulabrai made a further payment of Rs. 1,047 on further entries of shipped goods worth Rs. 29,930."<sup>4</sup> Thus although the demand for customs was made first in 1677 and reiterated in the emperor's *farmān* of 1680, and in his orders in 1682, it was only in 1684 that an amount of 9,532 rupees (8,485 + 1,047) was actually

<sup>1</sup> 10 Hug.225; *Hedge's Diary*, Vol.I. pp.61-62, 92-93, quoted in *ibid.*, pp.361-362.

<sup>2</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1678-1684, p.351.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.319.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.340.

paid as customs. It is further to be noted that though the local authorities insisted on inspecting the type and quantity of goods shipped, it was ultimately on the basis of the lists submitted by Hedges that the customs were paid.

By this time there came about a great change in the attitudes of both Hedges and his masters. The former realized that his private trade and cooperation with the "interlopes"<sup>1</sup> was much more lucrative than his Agentship of the Company in Bengal. Hence he began to mind his own business more than that of the Company. The Company's directors, on the other hand, came over to a "forward" or aggressive policy on account of a number of factors. First, as mentioned earlier, their expulsion by the Dutch in 1682 from the factory at Bantam in Indonesia made the English company all the more desperate to establish themselves firmly in the south-Asian subcontinent. Secondly, their Bengal trade had turned out so profitable in recent years that they were in any case determined to hold it by hook or by crook. Thirdly, they were doubtless irritated by the misleading and incorrect reports of their agents about the "exactions", "oppressions" and "injustices" of the local authorities. So grossly were they misinformed in this regard that they came genuinely to believe that Shāista Khān's demand for customs was in violation of previously granted Mughal *farmāns* exempting the English from the payment of such customs duties, an assumption which, as it is clear from the above, was quite incorrect. Fourthly, no less irritating to them was the increasing appearance of the English free-traders -the interlopers- in Bengal and their readiness to pay the usual customs. This constituted a grave threat to the monopolistic interests of the Company as also to their design to avoid the payment of customs. The "infidelity" of their former "chief" Vincent in Bengal and Hedges' conspicuous assistance to the interlopers greatly disturbed the Company's directors. Hence they were now intent upon eradicating the interlopers by applying force in their own country as well as on the high seas and in the lands of their trade where the local authorities entertained them. Fifthly, the Company's attitude was also influenced by the political situation in the

<sup>1</sup> See *ibid.*, pp.335, 347.

Indian subcontinent. Aurangzeb's involvement in the long-drawn Deccan war and his consequent inability to pay full attention to the affairs in the north, including Bengal, must not have escaped the keen eyes of the adventurous "nation of shopkeepers" who had come all the way to the east after crossing distant and dangerous seas. Added to this, they were now involved in a struggle for survival in the race for commerce and colonies against their powerful European rivals. The English Company were thus in no mood to play just the role of peaceful traders. Their first political involvement in India was their encouragement and assistance to the Hindu revolt in the Karnatak against Mir Jumla's authority.<sup>1</sup> And now that Aurangzeb himself was in the Deccan and that the Marathas were generally hostile to both the Mughals and the English factories in the south, the Company's authorities appear to have chosen the eastern province of Bengal as an experimental target of their adventurous and forward policy. Last but not least, the English domestic political situation had also its share in shaping the policy of the Company. King James II was then in the throes of the fast approaching "Glorious Revolution" and he was easily persuaded to lend support to the monopolistic interests and adventurous policy of the Company. In 1683 while renewing the charter of the Company the King specifically empowered them to make war and peace and to enter into alliances with the Indian rulers.<sup>2</sup>

This change of attitude was reflected in the Company's despatch of 21 December 1683 in which it instructed its agents in India that "the insolency" of the Mughal Governors should be "shaken off" and "that it was resolved to assert its rights under Aurangzeb's farman and would never submit to the payment of customs."<sup>3</sup> The President of the Madras Council was further asked to "make a full statement of the Company's grievances to the Nawab, with a threat to leave the country if they were not redressed", and otherwise to "show a resolute countenance."<sup>4</sup> As indicated above, the Company was totally mistaken in assuming

<sup>1</sup> See *supra.*, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra.*, p. 457.

<sup>3</sup> *E.F.I.*, 1678-1684, p.362.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

that Aurangzeb's *farmān*, or for that matter any other Mughal *farmān*, had secured any special privilege for the English in Bengal or elsewhere. The other "grievances" referred to were also similarly ill-founded, misconceived, and vague. All the so-called "abuses", such as occasional and temporary stoppage of boats carrying the Company's goods, the demand of the local authorities to inspect them, etc., and even the factors' vague and unspecified reports of "exactions", "extortions" and "demands", if they meant bribes or illegal *gratis* given to or taken by the local officials, were all in essence related to the attempt to avoid the payment of the usual customs.

In pursuance of the same policy, and also disgusted by the performance of Hedges, the Company decided to dismiss the latter, to cancel the independent status of the Bengal factories and to place them once again under the control of the Madras Council. With these instructions Gyfford, the President of the Madras Council, arrived at Hugli in a ship on 29 August 1684.<sup>1</sup> Gyfford came with a "large retinue, including a complete company of soldiers from Fort St. George."<sup>2</sup> Immediately on his arrival there was a shooting incident which the factors claimed as the "salute of 11 guns" from the ship *Ann*, anchored at Hugli, but which the governor of Hugli, 'Aziz Beg, claimed as firing by the soldiers brought by the President and resulting in the death of a man.<sup>3</sup> The factory records show at least that a shot "had been negligently left in one of the guns" which "came near hitting" the factory.<sup>4</sup> The complaint about the killing of a man was soon dropped, "but another quarrel arose over a fight between some of the *Ann*'s seamen and 'Aziz Beg's peons, in which several on each side were wounded." These incidents caused a good deal of ill-feeling between the two sides. The situation was eased, however, by the intervention of Shāista Khān who asked both parties to exercise moderation and be friendly.<sup>5</sup>

Soon the matter of customs came to the fore. It has already been noted that an amount of 9,532 rupees had been paid in March

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p.348.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p.349.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p.350.

and June of the year (1684) in respect of customs for goods shipped towards the end of the previous year and during the first half of 1684. Shortly before the arrival of Gyfford, Hedges had also settled the accounts with Gulabrai because he was no longer acceptable as a surety for the English.<sup>1</sup> Hence the English were asked to provide a new surety. In the meantime, as the editor of the factory records of this period clearly recognizes, the "difficulty over getting a farman from Aurangzeb for freedom from customs continued to be enhanced by the interlopers' willingness to pay them."<sup>2</sup> In fact Thomas Davis, a spokesman on behalf of the English free-traders came to an agreement with Shāista Khān about this time whereby they were permitted to trade and build factories in Bengal, subject to payment of customs at 3½ per cent.<sup>3</sup> Gyfford's arrival almost coincided with these developments. He ordered Pownsett, the factor at Dacca, to see the Nawwāb and the *dīwān*, and try to get rid of this "intolerable bondage" saying the Company had positively ordered that they should not yield to the demand for payment of customs, and "that the fact of Hedges having paid them contrary to its orders was one of the reasons why he was being sent home."<sup>4</sup> As the ships started coming in and as the Hugli Governor adopted a strong attitude about the payment of customs, however, Gyfford in consultation with his colleagues agreed to pay customs in such a way as would give it the appearance of compulsion. He sent the necessary funds to Pownsett and instructed him that "instead of giving security through a merchant, the sum of Rs. 20,000 should be handed over to the diwan himself, with a request to him to take what he pleased out of it."<sup>5</sup> Pownsett found the *dīwān*, however, a much more reasonable man. It was arranged that instead of the Company having a merchant as surety, Pownsett would give an undertaking, witnessed by the *qāḍī*, to pay customs at 3½ per cent. "according to the entries of goods signed by the Agent." This was done, and the *dīwān* issued a *parwāna* towards the end

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 341.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 349.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 350.

of October (1664) ordering 'Aziz Beg to accept the factory entries of goods on which customs were to be paid, and not to hinder its business.<sup>1</sup> Even before the arrival of the *parwāna* 'Aziz Beg had released the boats he had stopped.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the question of customs, two other matters strained relations between the English factors and the local authorities. The one was a quarrel of the factors with the manufacturers and *picars* (middlemen) at both Kasimbazar and Malda over the weighing and pricing of the goods. The quarrel was going on for a long time and was alternately being brought to the notice of Shāista Khān, before the *qādīs* of the two places, or before arbitrators.<sup>3</sup> The main trouble arose over the factors' practice of fixing a much lower price on the goods (cloth, silk) supplied to them than the current market price, and their application of force, such as imprisonment of the weavers in the factory to force compliance on the latter's part. Some of the cloth "had had to be valued three times," state the factory records, "before the *picars* could be brought to an agreement." This, and the confinement of weavers in the factories often called for the intervention of the local authorities. "Another difficulty lay in recovering the debts [advances made for the manufacture of cloth] of weavers, & C., in Malda", further state the records, "where they were protected by the *faujdar* from the usual imprisonment in the factory for that purpose."<sup>4</sup> Matters came to such a pass at Malda towards the end of the year (1664) that on 10 December Shāista Khān, acting on a report that the factory at that place had been turned into a fort, summoned Charnock, the factor at that place, to Dacca and even ordered that it should be pulled down.<sup>5</sup> This order "seems to have given the factors no trouble", for the report about the factory being turned into a fort was found incorrect.<sup>6</sup>

The other matter was that in August (1664) Rafī'al-Zamān, governor of Rajmahal, was said to have "received orders from

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p.351-352.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.351, 354.

<sup>3</sup> See for details *ibid.*, pp.332-33, 336-338, 344, 452-453, 445-56, 458.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.358.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p.355.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.358.

Shāista Khān to buy all the mohurs he could. He demanded those of the Company, and threatened to stop all the boats carrying treasure if he was refused them."<sup>1</sup> Coining of money and monopolizing the purchase of bullion have been acknowledged in the past, as at present, as the exclusive rights of the state. In fact a neglect of these rights in subsequent times sapped the foundation of the Muslim political power in Bengal. It may also be recalled that in 1677 Aurangzeb had demanded a mintage of 5 per cent from the English. The demand was not pressed with any seriousness and not much was heard about it after 1680. Shāista Khān's orders for the purchase of gold *mohurs* in 1684 do not appear to have been connected with the question of mintage, but they were clearly intended to establish the government's control over the import of bullion and, by the admission of the English factors themselves, were of a general nature and not specifically directed against the English. In any case these orders did not create any serious problem for the latter, at least for that year (1684), for they recorded that "most of the ingots had been turned into mohurs and sent away by the beginning of August" when Rafī'-al-Zaman received the above mentioned orders.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, from September onwards further treasures were brought in and coining of both silver and gold at Rajmahal proceeded as usual.<sup>3</sup>

Thus by the end of 1684 the English factors in Bengal were not in any serious difficulty nor were they placed under any discriminatory disadvantage. And under the arrangement made by Pownsett at Dacca about the payment of customs (which, of course, were not yet paid), goods were despatched from all the factories and the ships sailed away with them without any trouble. Yet the very fact that they were required to pay the same customs as were being paid by the other Europeans including their own countrymen, the so-called interlopers, broke the patience of the Company, who being now animated by a spirit of adventure and international competition, decided to apply force. With the help of their government and by applying their own force they first

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p.342.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See *Ibid.* p.354 and 358.

prevented the further coming of the "interlopers" in Bengal during the year.<sup>1</sup> Next the Company obtained the sanction of King James II for waging war against Shāista Khān and the emperor Aurangzeb.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly in 1686 the Company fitted out an expedition under the command of Vice-Admiral Nicholson with ten war-ships, each carrying 10 to 12 guns and with a regiment of 600 soldiers. The Madras Council was asked to supply 400 more soldiers from the garrison there.<sup>3</sup> Nicholson was instructed first to go to Balasore and to take the Company's agents from there, and then to proceed to Chittagong, capture it, build a fort and a mint there and in general to "render it a place of arms for the English on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal as Fort St. George was on the western shore."<sup>4</sup> From Chittagong Nicholson was to advance upon Dacca and dictate terms to Shāista Khān which were to include the cession of Chittagong, the restoration to the English of what was called "the privileges they were entitled to from the farmans of the former emperors", etc.<sup>5</sup> For achieving these objects Nicholson was also advised to enter into an alliance with the King of Arakan and with the Hindu chiefs and zamindars.<sup>6</sup>

The arrival of the expedition was delayed by bad weather and storm and ultimately only three ships together with the troops and the reinforcements from Madras reached Bengal early in October 1686. Instead of going to Chittagong Nicholson went to Hugli. The Madras authorities had also asked Charnock, the chief factor at Hugli, to raise a contingent of Portuguese infantry to be commanded by the Company's servants. The arrival of the English war-ships with a large number of troops naturally put the Mughal governor at Hugli on the alert and under instructions from Shāista Khān he began to collect forces for the protection of the place. On 28 October 1686 the first major clash took place between the two sides. The Mughal *faujdār* 'Abd al-Ghanī, being

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 342.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 343.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, also *B.M.P.*, Vol I.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



worsted, retreated from the place, while Nicholson cannonaded the town, burnt about five hundred houses, and sent landing parties to sack it. On coming to know about the situation Shāista Khān confiscated the English factories at the other places and sent a sizeable reinforcement of infantry and cavalry to expel the English from Hugli. Before the arrival of these forces, however, the English packed their stores and on 20 December (1686) sailed down to Sutanuti, the modern site of Calcutta. From there Charnock opened negotiations for a settlement. The peace talks, however, broke down early in February 1687 and the English then sailed further downwards, captured the Mughal fort at Thana (modern Garden Reach to the south of Calcutta) and the island of Hijli where they entrenched themselves. About the middle of May 1687 'Abd al-Ṣamad, a Mughal general, arrived at Hijli with 12,000 troops and after some fighting landed on the island on 28 May. The English abandoned Hijli.

There now followed another round of talks and hostilities ceased on 16 August 1687. The English were allowed to return to Sutanuti and a preliminary agreement was reached whereby they were to get appreciable concessions including the abrogation of the demand for 3½ per cent customs. But once again the peace efforts were frustrated because of the commencement of hostilities by the English on the western coast of India. Thereupon Shāista Khān withdrew the concession.

Henceforth the main theatre of the conflict was on the western coast. In the meantime the Directors of the Company appointed Captain Heath as their new Agent in Bengal (in place of Charnock) and sent him with a few war-vesels and 160 soldiers, with orders "either to prosecute the war with vigour or to bring away all the Company's servants" and goods from Bengal to Madras.<sup>1</sup> Before his arrival in Bengal towards the end of 1688, however, Shāista Khān left Bengal for good in June of that year. After his departure hostilities with the English dragged on for about two years more. These, and the settlement made in 1690 belong properly to the time of the succeeding viceroy, Ibrāhīm

<sup>1</sup> Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.349-350

Khān, and have therefore been noted briefly in the following chapter.

The foregoing review would show that Shāista Khān tried his best to be on good terms with the traders of the English Company. During the first term of his viceroyalty he accommodated them on all the matters they raised before him. Even when the emperor ordered for the realization of the usual customs from them, he suspended giving effect to the order and made repeated references to the emperor on behalf of the English. The allegation that he extorted money from them on various pretexts is totally incorrect and has to be understood against the background of the practices and habits of the Company's factors themselves, particularly their private trade and irregular dealings with the finances of the Company. Nor is the theory of his alleged oppression an adequate explanation of the English war against him and the Mughal government. Having failed in their attempt to establish a custom-free trade in Bengal first by means of a dubiously obtained *nishān* from prince Shujā' in 1651, and then by having recourse to the myth of "usage and custom", they were naturally irritated. This coincided with four important developments of both local and international nature: the increasing profitability of the Bengal trade which made them all the more determined to capture it by any means; the fierce competition with the Dutch who totally expelled them from Indonesia, thus creating in the minds of the English a corresponding urge to occupy an equally indisputable position in the south Asian subcontinent; the growing appearance of the "interlopers" who had to be forced out of the scene for the sake of the Company's monopoly as well as of the English nation's international interests; and finally the prolonged Daccan war of Aurangzeb which brought some of the opposing forces to the fore and encouraged the English to effect an alliance with them. The English Company undertook the expedition for a greater stake than merely to avoid the payment of customs and other alleged exaction, for all these taken together were far less than the cost of the expedition. They did not succeed in the first attempt; but the same policy and the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 444-446; Wilson, *Early Annals, etc.*, Vol.I., pp.90-97.

same strategy earned them success a little afterwards when the circumstances were more favourable. Meanwhile there is no need to make an escapegoat of Shāista Khān.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END

(1099—1123 H/1688—1712)

The vicereignty of Shāista Khān marked the climax of Mughal Muslim rule in Bengal. The period that followed from 1688 to 1712 A.C., covering the vicerealties of Khān-i-Jahān Bahādur (1688-1689), Ibrāhīm Khān (1689-1697) and Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn (1697-1712), witnessed the beginning of those factors and processes which ultimately led to the end of Muslim rule in the country. Hostilities with the English were ended in 1690 and they were allowed to resettle themselves at the present site of Calcutta. Eight years afterwards they were also allowed to purchase the *zamindari* rights of the three villages of Sutanuti, Kalikātā (Calcutta) and Govindpur. It was from this small but solid base that they gradually built up their military and political power and ultimately became the masters of the land. Secondly, it was also during this period that the growing internal weakness of the Mughal state manifested itself through the revolt of Rahīm Khān, the chief of the Afghans in Orissa, in alliance with Shova Singh, a Hindu adventurer of Midnapur in south-west Bengal (1695—97). The revolt was of course crushed; but it was the first serious challenge to Mughal authority in Bengal from within since the time of emperor Jahāngīr. More than this, taking advantage of the temporary confusion caused by it in west Bengal the European companies fortified their settlements and strengthened themselves militarily. Thirdly, the process of decline was typified by the internecine squabbles and conflicts between the viceroy Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn and the provincial *dīwān* Kartalab Khān (Murshid Qulī Khān). This conflict had for its immediate results the transfer of the revenue capital of the province from Dacca to Murshidabad, and of the residence of the viceroy himself from Dacca to Patna. In effect Dacca ceased to be the capital of Muslim Bengal, though for sometime more it continued to be called so, and it began to decline. On the other hand the absence of the viceroy coupled with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, followed by wars of succession at Delhi, weakened the hold of the centre upon the

province and enabled the able and intelligent *dīwān* Murshid Qulī Khān to concentrate in his hands the powers of both the *dīwān* and the *nāzim* (*sūbahdār*). For two decades after Aurangzeb's death Murshid Qulī Khān did indeed succeed in maintaining an uneasy peace in Bengal; but this he could do mainly by continuing to pay, on the one hand, nominal allegiance and regular revenue to each succeeding emperor at Delhi and, on the other hand, by relegating into the background the Muslim nobility and *jāgīrdārs* in Bengal, of whom he was not unreasonably apprehensive, and in their stead relying for support and cooperation more and more upon the Hindu elements who soon emerged as the "power behind the throne". It was the alliance of these new "king-makers" with the adventurous English merchants which led to the overthrow of Muslim rule in Bengal exactly thirty years after Murshid Qulī Khān's death.

I: VICEROYALTY OF KHĀN-I-JAHĀN BAHADUR:  
THE SECOND ENGLISH EXPEDITION INTO BENGAL

Immediately on Shāista Khān's departure Khān-i-Jahān Bahādur acted as viceroy for about one year. During his time the war with the English dragged on, mainly on the west Indian coast. Captain Heath, whom the English Company had sent on a second expedition to Bengal early in 1688,<sup>1</sup> arrived there towards the end of October. In the first week of November he evacuated the English from Sutanuti (Calcutta) according to the Company's instructions, and on 8 November sailed towards Balasore on the Orissa coast. On his arrival near the place the Mughal *faujdār* offered to enter into terms with him and detained two of the Company's factors there as hostages against any hostile act on the part of Heath. The latter, however, landed on the port-town with a body of troops and mariners, stormed the fort there and captured New Balasore town on 29 November.<sup>2</sup> For about a month Captain Heath held the town and committed terrible atrocities on the inhabitants. On 23 December he set sail with his fleet and all the Englishmen for Chittagong with the object of seizing it and making it a base of operation, as was the original

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 513.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, *op.cit.*, p. 351

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Khān was promoted to the *mansab* of five thousand (*panj hazār mansabdār*) and became in quick succession the governor first of Kashmir, then of Lahore, then of Bihar, and finally of Bengal. When he came to Bengal he was pretty advanced in age and was naturally of a mild and peaceful disposition. He administered justice with strict impartiality and was noted for his encouragement to agriculture and commerce. "He unfurled to the oppressed the gates of justice and clemency", writes the *Riyāḍ*, "and did not allow an ant to be oppressed."<sup>1</sup>

On coming to Bengal and under instructions from Aurangzeb he released the English merchants kept as prisoners at Dacca on account of the war, and sent a letter to Job Charnock, then at Madras, inviting him to return to Bengal and resume their trade there. The Madras Council asked for a separate imperial *farmān* specially for Bengal. This was assured and Job Charnock with his council and factors arrived at Sutanuti (Calcutta) on 24 August 1690.<sup>2</sup> In February an imperial order (*ḥasb al-ḥukm*) under the seal of the *wazīr* (Asad Khān) was issued to the English allowing them to trade in Bengal on condition of a yearly payment of 3,000 rupees only in lieu of all dues. Thus, theoretically, the English were confirmed in the position which Prince Shujā's *nishān* and those of both Mīr Jumla and Shāista Khān had secured to them. The political and military implications of the settlement of 1690 were, however, far greater. The English had secured for them the status of the most favoured foreign nation in Bengal and this was acknowledged by the local authorities, implicitly as well as explicitly. Secondly, during their temporary stay at Sutanuti in course of the war the English had discovered that the latter place was far more strategic, militarily, navigationally as well as commercially. Hence, on their return to Bengal, they settled at that place instead of Hugli. Being away from the immediate notice of the Mughal *faujdar* at Hugli, the English could and did soon build up their military strength at Calcutta. Naturally the English were happy with the new viceroy whom they styled as "the most famously just and good nabob."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ*, pp.230-231.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, *op.cit.*, p.357.

<sup>3</sup> C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol.I, p.124.

About the same time the French also obtained a foothold in Bengal. It was during Shāista Khān's time that the French had first bought a piece of land in 1674 at Chandernagor, four miles south of Hugli; but due to the opposition of the Dutch they could not obtain permission to build any residence there. In 1690 the French agent Deslandes, "by bribing the Nawab's court at Dacca", secured the much desired permission to build residences at Chandernagar. And in 1693 Deslandes, by promising to pay the emperor a sum of rupees 40,000, one fourth of it immediately and the remainder in six yearly instalments of 5,000 rupees each, secured an imperial order which allowed the French to trade freely in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, with the same privileges as enjoyed by the Dutch, and paying like the latter  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent custom duty.<sup>1</sup> The Dutch had already their settlement at Chinsurah, adjacent to Hugli. Thus by 1693 the English, the French and the Dutch were well settled respectively at Calcutta, Chandernagor and Chinsurah.

### III. REBELLION OF RAHĪM KHĀN AFGHAN AND SHOVĀ SINGH

Shortly afterwards, in 1695, the rebellion of Rahīm Khān and Shovā Singh "broke the deep peace that Bengal had enjoyed since the accession of Shāh Jahān". Rahīm Khān was the leader of the Afghans settled in Orissa. Shovā Singh belonged to Cheto-Barda, then in the Burdwan district but now included in the Ghatal-Chandrakona subdivision of the Midnapur district. He was apparently a landholder (*zamindar*) subordinate to Krishna Rām, "a Panjabi Khatri who held the contract for the revenue collection of the Burdwan district".<sup>2</sup> The main cause of the disturbances, as the *Riyād* points out, was "the Emperor's protracted absence from his capital" in connection with the Deccan campaigns.<sup>3</sup> The persistent opposition offered by the Marathas and the recent English war upon the Mughals must have contributed to a diminishing of the fear and prestige of the Mughal arms. The Afghans had never completely reconciled themselves to their

<sup>1</sup> P. Kaepelin, *La Compagnie Indes Orientales* et. F. Martin, Paris, 1908, pp.321-322, quoted in *H.B.* II, p.392.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.393.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād.*, p.231.



defeat at the hands of the Mughals. Hence the emperor's involvement in the Deccan, coupled with the unmartial and mild disposition of the Bengal viceroy Ibrāhīm Khān, appear to have encouraged Rāhīm Khān to attempt a revival of the Afghan power, at least in Orissa and south-west Bengal. Shovā Singh was also encouraged by the situation, but his main motive was obviously brigandage and plunder. At any rate he was characterless and was not inspired by any "racial" or "national" ideal, as was the case with the Marathas. Whether there was any prior understanding between Rāhīm Khān and Shovā Singh is not known; but they joined their forces almost immediately after the outbreak of the disturbances.

About the middle of 1695 Shovā Singh started plundering his neighbours. He was immediately opposed by Krishna Rām, the "zamindar of Burdwan". The latter was however defeated and killed. Shovā Singh then occupied Burdwan town, captured Krishna Rām's property and treasures and carried away his wife and daughters as captives<sup>1</sup> and took the title of Rājā. Krishna Rām's son Jagat Rāy fled to Dacca and informed the viceroy about the rebellion. Ibrāhīm Khān underrated the danger, taking Shovā Singh as a mere plunderer and being apparently still unaware of Rāhīm Khān Afghan's alliance with him. The viceroy therefore simply asked Nūr Allah Khān, *faujdar* of Hugli, to march against Shovā Singh and did not take any other strong measure to quell the rebellion. The latter's strength was in the meantime considerably increased by his alliance with the Afghan leader Rāhīm Khān, with whose support he next advanced upon Hugli in July 1696. The *faujdar* Nūr Allah Khān timidly shut himself up in the Hugli fort, and when pressed on by the rebel forces, escaped from it on the night of 22 July 1696. Shovā Singh's forces next entered the town and plundered it. Further progress of the rebels was checked by the Dutch who, being requested by the *faujdar* and other notables of Hugli who had taken shelter with them, sent 300 of their soldiers by land and two of their ships by the river against the rebels. At the approach of the Dutch forces, and the ships having started bombardment on the fort, Shovā Singh's forces

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

escaped from the back-door of the town.

The plunder of Hugli was the climax of Shovā Singh's short rebellious career of about one year. From Hugli he retired to Burdwan where towards the end of the same month (July 1696) he made an attempt upon the honour of Krishna Rām's daughter but was stabbed to death by that noble girl who next committed suicide.<sup>1</sup> Shovā Singh's brother Himmat Singh succeeded him, but as he was "a worthless voluptuary" the rebel forces selected Raḥīm Khān as their chief. The latter now crowned himself and took the title of Raḥīm Shāh. Himmat Singh continued, however, to serve under Raḥīm Shāh.

Raḥīm Shāh next organized a vast army consisting of some 10,000 horse and 60,000 infantry. It appears that in view of his success and the failure of the Mughal authorities at Hugli all types of people and adventurers now swelled his ranks. With a large contingent he advanced upon Makhsusabad (Murshidabad) by way of Nadia. The *jāgīrdār* of the former place, Ni'mat Khān, supported by his nephew Tahawwar Khān, attempted to oppose the rebel leader, but were both defeated and killed in battle. In September 1696 Raḥīm Shāh defeated a government force of 5,000, entered Makhsusabad and plundered it. The silk manufacturers of Kasimbazar were also forced to pay ransom. From Makhsusabad Raḥīm Shāh proceeded north-westward and captured Rajmahal. By March 1697 he took Malda also. Thus practically the whole of western Bengal passed under the control of Raḥīm Shāh. Bands of the rebel forces carried on plundering raids in the locality.

The rebellion of Shovā Singh and Raḥīm Khān exposed the vulnerability of the Mughal authority in Bengal and also demonstrated the superiority of the European forces of the foreign trading companies. More than this, the lawlessness which prevailed over west Bengal provided an occasion for the latter to

<sup>1</sup> *H.B.*, II, p.394. Jadunath Sarkar's statement (*H.B.* II, pp.393-394) that "Shova Singh built up a State of his own some 180 miles in length along the bank of the Ganges, with Hugli in its middle, and levied tolls and custom duties on the river traffic", is not borne out by his own description of Shova Singh's rebellion. The "brigand", as Sarkar characterizes Shova Singh (*ibid.* p.393), was stabbed to death only a few days after his expulsion from Hugli. The picture of the rebel state given by Sarkar could more appropriately be ascribed to Raḥīm Khān Afghani who, as noted hereafter,

further strengthen their military establishments and to seek the viceroy's permission to fortify their factories. Ibrāhīm Khān asked them in general terms to defend themselves. Taking advantage of this order they fortified their settlements. This was the beginning of the English "Fort William" in Calcutta, the French "Fort Orleans" at Chandernagar and the Dutch "Fort Gustavas" at Chinsurah.<sup>1</sup> At Calcutta (Sutanuti) the English built walls and bastions round their factory and mounted guns on the ramparts. At Chandernagar the French raised palisades and also bastions facing the river. Similarly the Dutch at Chinsurah fortified their factory with walls. All the three nations also enlisted Rajputs and other local bands to increase their armies.

IV: VICEROYALTY OF PRINCE 'AZĪM AL-SHĀH:  
SUPPRESSION OF RAḤĪM KHĀN AFGHAN

Shortly after Raḥīm Khān's capture of Malda (March 1697) the emperor Aurangzeb received full reports about the rebellion and about Ibrāhīm Khān's negligence and inactivity. The latter was immediately recalled from Bengal and in his place Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, grandson of Aurangzeb and son of Prince Sultān Mu'azzam (later Emperor Shāh 'Ālam Bahādur Shāh), was appointed viceroy in Bengal. Pending the new viceroy's arrival, the emperor ordered Zabardast Khān, son of Ibrāhīm Khān, to take the field against the rebels. Zabardast Khān immediately marched with an army towards Murshidabad district where on the bank of the Ganges near Bhagwangola Raḥīm Khān opposed him in May 1697. After two days' fight, however, the rebel forces were completely routed and their camp was captured. Zabardast Khān next sent a detachment of cavalry towards Rajmahal and Malda which were also quickly recovered before Raḥīm Khān and his men could fall back on that region. Before the onset of the rains Zabardast Khān recovered Burdwan town. Raḥīm Khān and his allies retired in the jungles of Chandrakona. The ease with which the rebels were beaten back indicates that their earlier successes were really due to the negligence of the aged viceroy Ibrāhīm Khān. However, as it was now difficult to pursue the rebels in the forests during the rainy season, Zabardast Khān

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Early Annals*, etc., Vol. I, p. 147.

remained encamped at Burdwan.

In the meantime Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, better known by his later title, 'Azīm al-Shān, reached Bihar on his way to Bengal and halted at Monghyr for the rains. At the end of the rains he advanced from that place and arrived near Burdwan in November 1697.<sup>1</sup> There Zabadaṣṭ Khān resigned his command because, it is said, he was coldly received by the Prince, to whom he made over charge of the campaign and in January 1698 left Bengal along with Ibrāhīm Khān for the emperor's camp in the Deccan. 'Azīm al-Shān did not however immediately undertake the campaign against Raḥīm Khān and remained stationed at that place for about eight months. Taking advantage of this inactivity on the Prince's part Raḥīm Khān came out of his forest retreat of Chandrakona and resumed his plundering raids in the neighbourhood of both Nadia and Burdwan. 'Azīm al-Shān then opened negotiations with Raḥīm Khān for peace; but the latter, taking advantage of this move, lured the Prince's chief minister Khwāja Anwar to a friendly interview and there treacherously killed him.

The Prince now sent his army under Ḥamīd Khān Qureshī against the rebels who were decisively defeated in a battle near Chandrakona in August (or September) 1698. Raḥīm Khān was captured and beheaded by Ḥamīd Khān. As a reward for this feat the latter was given the title of Shamsḥīr Khān Bahādur and appointed *faujdār* of Sylhet. After the defeat and death of their leader, the remnant of the rebel forces melted away, while some of them were taken into the Mughal service.

The viceroyalty of Prince 'Azīm al-Shān lasted theoretically from 1697 to 1712; but in effect it came to an end in 1703 when he left the province and continued to govern it in absentia through his agents. During the last nine years, from 1703 to 1712, the Bengal scene was dominated by the powerful provincial *dīwān* Murshid Qulī Khān who ultimately became the *nāẓim* or *sūbahdār*. The first period of 'Azīm al-Shān's viceroyalty, that is the period between 1697 and 1703, may also be divided into two almost equal parts: from November 1697 to December 1700 the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. A. Karīm is obviously mistaken in stating (*Murshid Qulī Khān and his times*, Dacca, 1963, p. 2) that the Prince reached Burdwan in November 1698.

Prince exercised rather an uncontrolled authority in Bengal. In December 1700 Murshid Qulī Khān (Kartalab Khān) arrived as the new *dīwān*. The period from that date till 1703 was marked by increasing conflicts between him and the Prince.

V: THE PRINCE MAKES MONEY: THE ENGLISH PURCHASE  
SUTĀNUTI, KALIKĀTĀ AND GOVINDPUR (1698)

Prince 'Azīm al-Shān possessed great intelligence and a strong will; but besides the final suppression of Rahīm Khān, his other acts in the initial period of his viceroyalty were neither to his credit nor to the interest of the land and the people committed to his charge. His one absorbing aim appears to have been the accumulation of wealth presumably in preparation for the war of succession which he, like many others of his time, could visualize would inevitably follow the death of his aged grandfather Aurangzeb. And of all persons who could understand and exploit this motive of the Prince to their best advantage were the English merchants. In July 1698 they presented 'Azīm al-Shān an amount of rupees 16,000 and obtained his permission to purchase from the existing holders the right of renting the three villages of Sutanuti, Kalikātā (Calcutta) and Govindpur, corresponding to the northern, central and southern areas of the present city of Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> The English had already obtained the status of the most favoured foreign nation in Bengal and had also fortified their settlement at Sutanuti. Now they obtained what they henceforth claimed their *zamindari* right in the land.

The Prince's desire to amass money led him also to the questionable practice of *Sauda-i-Khāṣ* or "Personal trade of His Excellency". It is stated that he established a monopoly in most necessities of life and other things and forced them on retail dealers at heightened prices. Fortunately, he could not do so for a long time, and only after about a year the matter came to the notice of the emperor who strongly reprimanded him and asked him to desist from it, adding: "Whence have you learnt this *Sauda-i-Khāṣ* which is only another name for pure insanity? Not certainly from your grandfather, nor from your father. Better

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.150; also *Old Fort William in Bengal*, Vol.I, p.39.

turn your thoughts from it.”<sup>1</sup> Not only this, the emperor also appears to have punished the Prince for such oppressive conduct; for by an imperial order issued on 1 July 1699 Prince ‘Azīm al-Shān’s rank was reduced from “Ten Thousand *dhāt*” (with 6,000 troopers) to “Nine Thousand *dhāt*” (with 5,000 troopers). “Evidently it was for the Sauda-i-Khās.”<sup>2</sup>

To what extent the Prince interfered with the collection of the provincial revenue and its remittance to the emperor is not clear. The provincial revenue administration had been since the time of Akbar in the hands of a *dīwān* who was independent of the viceroy. At the beginning of Prince ‘Azīm al-Shān’s viceroyalty Mukarramat Khān was the provincial *dīwān*. He, along with some other revenue officers, were stated to have misappropriated a considerable part of the provincial revenue.<sup>3</sup> At any rate the emperor, then in the twentieth year of his Deccan campaigns, was in need of money and was not obviously satisfied with the remittance from Bengal. Hence in November 1700 Aurangzeb transferred the honest and efficient *dīwān* at Hyderabad, Kartalab Khān, (later Murshid Qūlī Khān) to Bengal. In Hyderabad Kartalab Khān was at the same time *faujdār* (governor or administrator) of Yelkondal. Similarly in Bengal he was also made *faujdār* of the important locality of Makhsusabad (Murshidabad). On coming to Bengal he immediately devoted himself to the task of reorganizing the revenue administration. Broadly, he took three specific steps in this regard. First, he established his direct control over the revenue officials and released them from the Prince’s interference.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, with the help of efficient officers he prepared a complete revenue roll of the *khalīṣah* (crownlands) and *jāgīr* lands and also of the customs revenue.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *H.B.*, II, p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> Jadunath Sarkar, *ibid.*, n. Sarkar’s observation in this connection that the “evil practice had prevailed in Bengal from Shuja’s time; Mir Jumla and Shāista Khān had indulged in it; ...” (*ibid.* p. 402) is not correct. They were undoubtedly great merchants, but they did not establish any monopolistic business in the necessities of life. Aurangzeb’s strong disapproval and stoppage of the practice even in the case of his grandson is a further proof that his viceroys like Mir Jumla and Shāista Khān could not have dared indulge in such a practice.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Ināyet Allāh’s *Ahkām-i-‘Ālamiyā*, quoted in *H.B.*, II, p. 409, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Riyāḍ*, p. 247. *T.B.*, 26a and 26b; quoted in A. Karim, *Murshid Qulī Khān and his times*, Dacca, 1963, pp 18-19, also Kaliprasanna Bandopadhyaya, *Bānglā tihāsa, Nabābī Anāl*, Calcutta, p. 35.

Thirdly, finding that most of the fertile and rich areas in eastern Bengal capable of yielding an increased revenue were held as *jāgīrs*, he sought and obtained the emperor's permission to resume these for the Crown and, in their stead, to assign new *jāgīrs* in Orissa for the *jāgirdārs*. It doubtless took some time to carry out these measures, but by honest exertion Kartalab Khān was able to effect an immediate increase in the revenue receipts and to transmit, at the end of the first year of his office, a sum of one *kror* of rupees (10,000,000) to the emperor.<sup>1</sup>

#### VI: CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PRINCE AND KARTALAB KHĀN

While this action earned for him the emperor's increased confidence in him, it also created for Kartalab Khan enemies in Bengal, the foremost of whom appears to have been the Prince himself. It is related that being jealous of the new *dīwān* Prince 'Azīm instigated a band of *naqdī* soldiers,<sup>2</sup> whose pay had fallen in arrears, to create a *mélee* over a demand for pay and to kill the *dīwān*. The attempt failed and Kartalab Khān boldly accused the Prince on his face in the open court of having instigated the trouble and also threatened him with dire consequences if such an attempt was repeated.<sup>3</sup> The *dīwān* also sent a full official report of the incident to the emperor, paid off the recalcitrant band of *naqdī* soldiers and struck them off the roll of the army. The Prince of course protested his innocence and threatened the *naqdī* soldiers with punishment for their mutinous conduct. The emperor also, on receipt of Kartalab Khān's report, sternly reprimanded the Prince and assured the *dīwān* that henceforth the *nāzīm* (viceroy) and other officers in the province would "behave more gently" towards him.<sup>4</sup>

The incident, besides creating a breach between the Prince and the *dīwān*, brought to surface the inherent limitations of the system of check-and-balance in the sphere of provincial administration and showed that with the weakening of the central authority it could open the gates for fratricidal conflicts. More

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, p.247.

<sup>2</sup> A class of soldiers who received cash salaries.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād.*, p.250.

<sup>4</sup> *Riyād.*, p.252; *Ahkām-i-Ālamgiri*, p. 155, quoted in *H.B.I.*, p.404.

than this, it deeply affected the subsequent course of the country's history. Being apprehensive of further attempts on his life<sup>1</sup> Kartalab Khān removed the headquarters of the *dīwānī* administration from Dacca to Makhsusabad (Murshidabad). He is said to have had a consultation with the *zamindars* and *qānungos* on this matter who were of opinion that the place was centrally located for this purpose.<sup>2</sup> In fact the selection of Makhsusabad was a foregone conclusion. The place had already become an important centre for revenue purposes. When Tavernier visited Bengal in 1666 he found Makhsusabad "a great town, 3 koss from Kasimbazar, where the Receiver-General of Shāista Khān resided," to whom Bernier presented his bill of exchange for some rarities sold to the Nawwāb.<sup>3</sup> It may also be noted that the emperor had appointed Kartalab Khān *faujdar* of Makhsusabad not just at random without any reason. And as he was the governor of the place he naturally selected it for his residence when he decided to remove the revenue headquarters from Dacca. With the whole revenue establishment and officers Kartalab Khān moved to Makhsusabad in the second year of his office, in 1702 A.C. The transfer of the revenue capital of the province from Dacca robbed it of much of its importance, and before long the *sūbhadār* also left the place. From this time Dacca began to decline and recede into the background. Secondly, henceforth Kartalab Khān began to depend more and more on Hindu officials and zamindars in revenue matters. This policy was largely responsible for the rise of a new class of king-makers who soon overshadowed the Muslim nobility in the country.

The conflict between the Prince and the *dīwān* soon found expression through another issue. At the end of 1702 the Orissa *sūbhadār* 'Askar Khān died and the emperor conferred the vacant post on Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, in addition to his Bengal post. Kartalab Khān raised objection to this arrangement and on his representation the appointment was cancelled after only a fortnight. As a measure of compromise, however, the emperor

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ*, p.252.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.251, T.B., ff.28B-29a, quoted in A. Karim, *Murshid Qulī Khān and his times*, p.21.

<sup>3</sup> Tavernier, Vol.1, p.108. By "Receiver-General" Bernier obviously means either the viceroy's *dīwān* or the provincial *dīwān*.



added, on 21 January 1703, the *ṣubahdārī* of Bihar to Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, and at the same time entrusted the executive administration of Orissa to Kartalab Khān, "calling him *nāib ṣubahdār* and *faujdār* (or *hāris*, i.e. defender) of Orissa."<sup>1</sup> Even this arrangement did not solve the conflict. Hence, after about six months, on 29 July 1703, the emperor ordered the Prince to take up his residence in Bihar, leaving his son Prince Farrukh Siyar as his deputy at Dacca. At the same time Kartalab Khān was elevated to the position of *ṣubahdār* of Orissa, in addition to his post of *dīwān* of Bengal and Orissa, and the young prince Farrukh Siyar was asked to "obey the diwan as his guardian".<sup>2</sup>

This arrangement was made after or on the eve of Kartalab Khān's visit to the emperor's court in the Deccan in 1703. Kartalab Khān not only submitted there an increased revenue from Bengal but also presented the emperor and his ministers with large amounts of money and rarities from Bengal. He also fully satisfied the central *dīwān* and auditor-general about the revenue accounts of Bengal. The emperor conferred on Kartalab Khān the title of Murshid Qulī Khān, probably confirming him at that time as *ṣubahdār* of Orissa, presented him with a robe of honour, a standard and kettle-drums, allowed him to rename Makhsusabad as Murshidabad<sup>3</sup> and to establish a royal mint

<sup>1</sup> H.B.II., p.404.

<sup>2</sup> *Ahkām-i-'Ālamgīrī*, ff.166.b, 117b and 220a, quoted in *ibid.*, pp.404, 405. Dr. A. Karim does not appear to be correct in stating (*Murshid Qulī Khān and his Times*, p.23) that Farrukh Siyar's stay at Dacca "was only a private arrangement made by the *subahdār* without any proper imperial sanction." Earlier (at p.22) Dr. Karim states, however, that the Emperor ordered the prince to leave Bengal and to retire to Bihar. It is simply unreasonable to assume that the emperor made such an order without making any provision for the Bengal administration. Dr. Karim's confusion seems to have arisen from his assumption, based on the rather general statement of the *Riyād* and the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh*, that the emperor's orders for Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn to leave Bengal were made as an immediate sequel to the *naqdī* soldiers incident, though he (Dr. Karim) notes correctly, on the basis of the English records, that the Prince left Bengal towards the end of 1703 or by the beginning of 1704. That means he left Bengal some two to three years after the *naqdī* soldiers incident. The important fact which escaped Dr. Karim's notice is the conflict over the Orissa appointment and as its sequel, the addition of Bihar *ṣubahdārī* to 'Azīm al-Dīn and the elevation of Kartalab Khān to the *ṣubahdārī* of Orissa. Obviously, once again, neither could the Prince, short of open insubordination, withdraw to Bihar without the Emperor's permission, nor could the latter have asked the Prince to move to Bihar, which was till then under a separate *ṣubahdār* named Shamshir Khān, without first bringing it under 'Azīm al-Dīn's jurisdiction. Because of having missed these points Dr. Karim also fails to explain adequately Kartalab Khān's visit to the imperial court in the later half of 1703 (pp.22-23) and his receipt of the title of Murshid Qulī Khān, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād*, p.254; T.B., (30.b).

there. Further, he was appointed, in January 1704, *dīwān* of Bihar also.<sup>1</sup> With these honours and promotions Kartalab Khān, now Murshid Qulī Khān, returned to Bengal in May, 1704.<sup>2</sup>

Before Murshid Qulī Khān returned to Bengal, Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn moved out of Dacca at the end of 1703 or the beginning of 1704.<sup>3</sup> He fixed his residence at Patna which he was also permitted to rename after him as 'Azīmabād, just as Murshid Qulī Khān was allowed to rename Makhsusabad after himself. With the Prince's departure from Dacca his viceroyalty in Bengal practically came to an end, for he never afterwards returned to the province where Murshid Qulī Khān emerged as the real administrator, holding at the same time the office of *dīwān* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, *ṣūbahdār* of Orissa, and "guardian" of the *nā'ib-ṣūbahdār* Prince Farrukh Siyar at Dacca. Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn remained at Patna ('Azīmabād) for about three years more when he was recalled to court on the eve of emperor Aurangzeb's death. After the emperor's death in 1707 his son Bahādur Shah I, father of Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, became emperor, conferred on the latter the title of 'Azīm al-Shān, and continued his appointment as *ṣūbahdār* of Bengal and Bihar. Prince 'Azīm al-Shān ('Azīm al-Dīn) stayed at court, however, nominally ruling Bengal and Bihar through his sons Farrukh Siyar and Karīm al-Dīn as deputy *ṣūbahdārs* respectively at Dacca and Patna, and acting rather as adviser of his father till his death in February 1712. Prince 'Azīm al-Shān was killed in the following month in the war of succession which followed Bahādur Shāh I's death.

<sup>1</sup> *Ahkām-i-'Alamgiri*, f. 105 b.

<sup>2</sup> *Consultations*, 20 May and 8 June 1704, quoted in A. Karim, *op.cit.*, pp. 23, 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Consultations*, 2 March 1704; also *Abstract of Letters received from 'Coast' and 'Bay'*, Vol. I, p. 3, both quoted in A. Karim, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

PART IV  
THE MURSHIDABAD NIYĀBAT

## CHAPTER XXIII

### MURSHID QULĪ KHĀN (1704-1727)

#### I: MURSHID QULĪ KHĀN, "A MAN CHOSEN BY GOD"

From 1704 to 1727 Bengal enjoyed a comparative and rather uneasy peace under Murshid Qulī Khān, while the centre of the Mughal empire had been convulsed by frequent wars of succession and change of rulers. Very little information is available regarding Murshid Qulī Khān's early life prior to his emergence in the Bengal scene. According to the *Ma'āthir al-'Umarā'* he is said to have been originally a Brahman boy whom Hājī Shafī' of Isfahan, a veteran Mughal official serving in various capacities including the *dīwānī* of Bengal and the Deccan, is stated to have brought up like a son giving him the name of Muḥammad Hādī. Neither the place nor the date of purchase of the boy is mentioned; but it is further stated that he accompanied his patron to Iran after the latter's retirement from the Mughal service and subsequently returned to India after his death. Muḥammad Hādī next accepted service under Hājī 'Abd Allah Khurasānī, the *dīwān* of Berar.<sup>1</sup>

This information about Murshid Qulī Khān's early life has been generally accepted by subsequent writers and, as Hājī Shafī' Isfahānī appears to have retired from Mughal service by 1690 and as Muḥammad Hādī is found employed as *dīwān* of the Deccan on the eve of his transfer to Bengal in 1700, it has been further assumed that he returned from Iran and accepted service in Berar by 1696.<sup>2</sup> There are however certain other facts which make it necessary to take this account with caution. When Muḥammad Hādī, then Kartalab Khān, first came to Bengal in 1700 he must have been over forty years of age, his daughter having been already married to Shujā' al-Dīn Khān, a Persian noble of Turkish origin. It also appears that Shujā' al-Dīn's son Muḥammad Asad Allah (later Sarfarāz Khān) was also born before this date. Hence Kartalab Khān must have been a married and well-established

<sup>1</sup> *Ma'āthir al-'Umarā'*, Vol. III., p. 751.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. Sarkar in *H.B.*, II., p. 400; A. Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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### MURSHID QULĪ KHĀN (1704-1727)

#### I: MURSHID QULĪ KHĀN, "A MAN CHOSEN BY GOD"

From 1704 to 1727 Bengal enjoyed a comparative and rather uneasy peace under Murshid Qulī Khān, while the centre of the Mughal empire had been convulsed by frequent wars of succession and change of rulers. Very little information is available regarding Murshid Qulī Khān's early life prior to his emergence in the Bengal scene. According to the *Ma'āthir al-'Umarā'* he is said to have been originally a Brahman boy whom Ḥājī Shafī' of Isfahan, a veteran Mughal official serving in various capacities including the *dīwānī* of Bengal and the Deccan, is stated to have brought up like a son giving him the name of Muḥammad Hādī. Neither the place nor the date of purchase of the boy is mentioned; but it is further stated that he accompanied his patron to Iran after the latter's retirement from the Mughal service and subsequently returned to India after his death. Muḥammad Hādī next accepted service under Ḥājī 'Abd Allah Khurasānī, the *dīwān* of Berar.<sup>1</sup>

This information about Murshid Qulī Khān's early life has been generally accepted by subsequent writers and, as Ḥājī Shafī' Isfahānī appears to have retired from Mughal service by 1690 and as Muḥammad Hādī is found employed as *dīwān* of the Deccan on the eve of his transfer to Bengal in 1700, it has been further assumed that he returned from Iran and accepted service in Berar by 1696.<sup>2</sup> There are however certain other facts which make it necessary to take this account with caution. When Muḥammad Hādī, then Kartalab Khān, first came to Bengal in 1700 he must have been over forty years of age, his daughter having been already married to Shujā' al-Dīn Khān, a Persian noble of Turkish origin. It also appears that Shujā' al-Dīn's son Muḥammad Asad Allah (later Sarfarāz Khān) was also born before this date. Hence Kartalab Khān must have been a married and well-established

<sup>1</sup> *Ma'āthir al-'Umarā'*, Vol. III., p. 751.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. Sarkar in *H.B.*, II., p. 400; A. Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

person at the latest by the early 1680's so as to have not only a marriageable daughter but also a grandson born to him before 1700. The story of Murshid Qulī Khān's having accompanied his patron to Iran in or by 1690 as a dependent young man thus appears improbable. Secondly, Murshid Qulī Khān was married to a Persian noble family, and his wife's sister was married to another Persian noble named Bakhsh 'Alī Khān who also subsequently came to Bengal. Had Murshid Qulī Khān been a recent convert with no family or employment standing by 1680, no noble would have given his daughter in marriage to him. Thirdly, in 1704 fourteen of his relatives came to India from Iran. It would be unreasonable to assume that they were merely related to him through Hājī Shafī' Khān. That they were closely related to Murshid Qulī Khān himself and had come to join him is clear from the fact that he rather went out of his way to persuade the emperor Aurangzeb to grant each of them a *mansab* and an employment in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Most probably the above mentioned Bakhsh 'Alī Khān and other relatives whom Murshid Qulī Khān pushed in various key posts under him came to Bengal about that time. Thus the story of his having been originally a Brahman boy does not appear to be free from doubts. Probably a Hindu origin has been attributed to him because of his notable success as a *dīwān*, Hindu officials including Todar Mall being famous in the domain of revenue administration during the Mughal period.

Be that as it may, on his return to Bengal early in 1704 after his visit to the imperial court<sup>2</sup> Murshid Qulī Khān emerged as the most trusted and powerful officer in the eastern provinces, being then appointed at the same time *dīwān* and *nāzim* (*ṣūbahdār*) of Orissa, *dīwān* of Bengal and Bihar, and guardian of the *nā'ib-ṣūbahdār* of Bengal. No Mughal official before or after him held so many posts at the same time, especially combining in himself the *dīwānship* and *ṣūbahdārship* of one province together with the *dīwānī* of two other provinces. The emperor Aurangzeb was quite aware of the importance of such concentration of powers in one hand, for he mentioned this in a communication in

<sup>1</sup> *Ahkām-i-'Ālāngiri*, f.106a, quoted in *H.B.*, II., p.402 and A. Karim, *op.cit.*, pp.24-25.

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*, pp.529-530.

the same year to Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, the *ṣūbahdār* of Bengal and Bihar, if only to make him feel that he was nonetheless the superintending authority over Murshid Qulī Khān. Aurangzeb wrote: "One and the same man is dīwān of Bengal and Bihar, and nāzim and dīwān of Orissa, with absolute authority. I myself have not the capacity for doing so much work; perhaps only 'a man chosen by God' is gifted with the requisite ability. You ought to get reports (about M.Q.'s actual administration) from some impartial person by tactful persuasion. The nāzim of the subah cannot breathe (at ease) on observing such concentration of power in one hand."<sup>1</sup>

This communication of course indicates the emperor's almost unbounded trust in the sincerity and capabilities of Murshid Qulī Khān, with which he was undoubtedly gifted; but it also reveals that the grand old emperor, still then involved in the protracted Deccan wars, was really facing a shortage of efficient and faithful personnel to man the various key posts in such important outlying provinces as Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Behind Murshid Qulī Khān's rather phenomenal rise lurked a crisis of character among the princes and the nobility which before long corroded the vitality of the Mughal imperial fabric and which, in a way, obliged Murshid Qulī Khān in his turn to fall back upon non-Muslim talent and support for discharging the duties with which he was entrusted. The emperor's trust was not, however, mislaid. Murshid Qulī Khān proved true to it till his death. With the exception of a short interval from 1708 to 1710 he remained at the helm of affairs in Bengal from 1704 to 1727, maintaining law and order in the province and remitting regular and rather increased revenues to each of the succeeding emperors at Delhi.

Needless to say, Murshid Qulī Khān's position during the rest of Aurangzeb's reign, from 1704 to 1707, was supreme and undisputed in the three provinces. He was allowed to appoint his own deputies and agents, and any appointment of consequence there was made according to his recommendations. As already mentioned, in 1704 fourteen of his relatives reached Delhi from

<sup>1</sup> *Aḥkām*, I, 198, translated and quoted by J.N. Sarkar in *H.B.*, II., pp.401-402.

Iran and at his request the emperor granted a *manṣab* to each of them and appointed them in various capacities in Bengal. Before the emperor's death there was a further increase in Murshid Qulī Khān's power and influence. As Aurangzeb felt his end was nearing he recalled to court Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, the *ṣūbahdār* of Bengal and Bihar residing at Patna, and entrusted Murshid Qulī Khān with the guardianship of both the deputy *ṣūbahdārs* at Dacca and Patna, Prince Farrukh Siyar and Prince Karīm al-Dīn respectively, who were the sons of Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn.

After Aurangzeb's death (7 March 1707) there was a temporary set-back in Murshid Qulī Khān's career. Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn's father Prince Muḥammad Mu'azzam, the eldest of the three surviving sons of the late emperor, came out victorious in the war of succession and ascended the throne in June 1707 under the title of Shāh 'Ālam Bahādur Shāh (I). He naturally rewarded and promoted his adherents and supporters including his four sons of whom Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, the second, received the title of Prince 'Azīm al-Shān and also the confirmation of his *ṣūbahdārship* of Bengal and Bihar. Like his other brothers, however, he chose to stay at court, governing the provinces through deputies and acting mainly as an adviser of the emperor. Presumably under his advice the new emperor, shortly after his accession, relieved Murshid Qulī Khān of the *dīwanī* of Bengal and Bihar, appointing Ḍiyā' Allah Khān and Shamsḥīr Khān respectively as *dīwāns* of the two provinces. And on 24 January 1708 (30 *Shawwāl*, 1119 H.) the *ṣūbahdārī* of Orissa also was conferred on Prince 'Azīm al-Shān and Murshid Qulī Khān was transferred to the Deccan as *dīwān* of that place.

For more than two years, from the beginning of 1708 to the end of 1710 Murshid Qulī Khān remained away from Bengal. During this period matters were not well managed in Bengal by Prince 'Azīm al-Shān's deputies who were often engaged in mutual rivalry and quarrels culminating in the murder of the *dīwān*, Ḍiyā' Allah Khān in January 1710 in the streets of Murshidabad at the hands of a group of *naqḍī* troopers. In the meantime there was a reconciliation between Murshid Qulī Khān and Prince 'Azīm al-Shān. The former was shrewd enough to



recognize the power behind the throne, while the latter, conscious of the honesty and abilities of the *dīwān*, wanted to win him over to his side in preparation for his bid for the Delhi throne. Accordingly Murshid Qulī Khān was reposted to Bengal where he arrived towards the end of 1710. According to the English records he returned to Bengal as Prince 'Azīm al-Shān's "creature".<sup>1</sup>

## II: CONFLICT WITH DĪYĀ' AL-DĪN KHĀN AND PRINCE FARRUKH SIYAR

Murshid Qulī Khān did not find the situation in Bengal, however, quite the same as he had left it. Particularly he found that a separate arrangement had been made for the administration of the port-towns of Hugli and Balasore and the collection of customs at those places. These were taken out of the provincial *dīwān*'s jurisdiction and placed directly under the control of the central government with one Dīyā' al-Dīn Khān, a noble with high connections at court, as *faujdar* (governor) of Hugli and controller of all the eastern ports of the Mughal dominion. Why this arrangement was made is not known; but it appears to have soon found favour with the European traders, especially the English, with whom Dīyā' al-Dīn Khān had already been on friendly terms while serving in the Deccan. Murshid Qulī Khān naturally disliked this division of authority and was much annoyed because, as will be seen later on, the English attempted to by-pass his authority in the matter of obtaining trade privileges in Bengal and also because Dīyā' al-Dīn Khān and his *pīshkār*, Kinkar Sen, "indulged in private trade and probably used their official position to avoid payment of duties, defrauding the state of its revenue."<sup>2</sup> At any rate Murshid Qulī Khān had good reasons for his objections to the arrangement and on his representations the emperor ordered in September 1711 the transfer of Dīyā' al-Dīn Khān from Hugli and placed the *faujdarī* of the place and the work of collection of customs once again under the provincial *dīwān*'s control.<sup>3</sup> Thereupon Murshid Qulī Khān sent Walī Beg as deputy governor of Hugli to take charge of the place and also to

<sup>1</sup> *Consultations*, 12 March, 1712.

<sup>2</sup> A. Karim, *op.cit.*, pp.37-38, on the basis of *Consultations*, 2 May, 1712.

<sup>3</sup> *Consultations*, 13 October, 1711. Also *Riyāḍ*, pp.262-263.

receive the accounts from Diyā' al-Dīn and his assistant Kinkar Sen. Instead of peacefully submitting to the imperial orders, however, Diyā' al-Dīn refused to give up charge or to render an account, collected his forces and entrenched himself before Chandernagar. Walī Beg also encamped with his troops at a short distance in front of Diyā' al-Dīn's entrenchment. The latter obtained support in men and arms from the neighbouring Dutch and French settlements. The English, though they considered Diyā' al-Dīn as their "friend",<sup>1</sup> intelligently held themselves aloof from the conflict at its initial stage, and unsuccessfully attempted to mediate between the contending parties at a later stage. Almost daily skirmishes with occasional fightings between the two armies continued for several months.

Diyā' al-Dīn was encouraged to prolong his defiance of Murshid Qulī Khān because of the death of the emperor Bahādur Shāh in February 1712 and the outbreak of another war of succession among his four surviving sons. For once in his life Murshid Qulī Khān took a hasty and rather ill-calculated step. He immediately declared 'Azīm al-Shāh emperor and had the Friday *khutba* (sermon) read and coins struck in his name.<sup>2</sup> The latter was however killed in the war of succession in March and Bahādur Shāh's eldest son came out victorious and ascended the throne under the title of Mu'izz al-Dīn Jahāndār Shāh. To make amends for his previous incorrect step, Murshid Qulī Khān now quickly announced his allegiance to the new emperor and sent a large amount of the provincial revenue to him. As shown by his subsequent conduct, Murshid Qulī Khān also resolved henceforth to keep out of any future dispute over the throne and to render allegiance to its actual occupant. This policy worked out well in the long run; but for the time being it involved him in another trouble. For Prince Farrukh Siyar, the late Prince 'Azīm al-Shāh's son, who was then at Patna, now disputed his uncle's succession, declared himself emperor and, in order to prosecute his war against Jahāndār Shāh, demanded from Murshid Qulī Khān the revenue of Bengal and Orissa. The latter declined to comply with

<sup>1</sup> *Consultations*, 13 October, 1711.

<sup>2</sup> *Consultations*, 25 March, 1712.

the requisition stating that he would be loyal to any prince who was on the throne of Delhi and that Farrukh Siyar was as yet only a contender for it. "Since Mu'izz al-Dīn, your uncle, is in possession of the Crown and the Throne," he wrote, "the imperial revenue cannot be paid to you."<sup>1</sup> Thereupon Farrukh Siyar sent two successive expeditions against Murshid Qulī Khān between April and September 1712.<sup>2</sup> On the second occasion Farrukh Siyar also asked the English, as they were "very strong in Calcutta", to seize Murshid Qulī Khān if he fled there.<sup>3</sup> The latter succeeded, however, in not only defeating and driving back Farrukh Siyar's forces but also in killing in battle on the second occasion the latter's *ṣūbahdār* designate for Bengal and Orissa, Rashīd Khān. Farrukh Siyar sent a third expedition against Bengal, but developments nearer the capital (Delhi) forced him to recall his troops and to march westward.

Being thus relieved of the pressure from Farrukh Siyar's side Murshid Qulī Khān now turned his attention towards the trouble at Hugli. He recalled Walī Beg and sent Mīr Abū Ṭālib as the new *faujdār* of Hugli with another force in November 1712 to dislodge Ḍiyā' al-Dīn. Mīr Abū Ṭālib could not however fare better mainly because of the disloyalty of the Portuguese mercenaries under his command and the disaffection of a section of his own soldiers. In the meantime there was a change of scene at Delhi. Farrukh Siyar, with the help of the two "Sayyid brothers", Sayyid Ḥasan 'Alī Khān, deputy *ṣūbahdār* of Bihar, and Sayyid 'Abd Allah Khān, deputy *ṣūbahdār* of Allahabad, succeeded in overthrowing Jahāndār Shāh and in ascending the throne in January 1713. Murshid Qulī Khān lost no time in tendering his allegiance to the new emperor and in sending him the revenues of Bengal and Orissa together with appropriate presents. On his part Farrukh Siyar, now eager to consolidate his position, was naturally happy to receive the allegiance and adhesion of so efficient and powerful an officer like Murshid Qulī Khān whom he knew too well to have any misgivings about him and whose

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, p.268.

<sup>2</sup> See for details, Karim, *op.cit.*, pp.44-47.

<sup>3</sup> *Consultations*, 2 May, 1712.

overthrow would not in any case be an easy job. Moreover the timely arrival of the Bengal and Orissa revenues and the prospect of such regular remittances in future, in view of Murshid Qulī Khān's past performances, soothed the wounded feelings of the new emperor. He was perhaps also mindful of the fact that Murshid Qulī Khān was after all initially a champion of his (Farrukh Siyar's) father's cause and that the *dīwān*'s subsequent attitude must have been due to the unexpected turn of events leading to the defeat and death of 'Azīm al-Shāh and the accession of Jahāndār Shāh. Hence Farrukh Siyar overlooked Murshid Qulī Khān's past but not too unconstitutional refusal to render allegiance and pay the revenues, confirmed him in the *dīwānī* of Bengal and also added to his charge the *dīwānī* and the *ṣūbahdārī* of Orissa. Moreover Khān-i-Jahān, who had been *ṣūbahdār* of Bengal during Jahāndār Shāh's short reign, was dismissed by Farrukh Siyar who nominally conferred the *ṣūbahdārī* on his infant son prince Farkhunda Siyar and appointed Murshid Qulī Khān as his deputy.<sup>1</sup> The infant prince died a few months afterwards in May 1713 when the *ṣūbahdārī* was given to the influential court noble Mīr Jumla, who continued to stay at court, while Murshid Qulī Khān was made his deputy as well in Bengal. Thus with the accession of Farrukh Siyar a critical phase in Murshid Qulī Khān's career was over and, with the exception of Bihar, he more than regained the position which he had come to occupy under Aurangzeb, combining in himself the *dīwānī* and *ṣūbahdārī* of Orissa, and the *dīwānī* and the deputy *ṣūbahdārī* of Bengal.

The fate of Murshid Qulī Khān's erstwhile enemy, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn, also took a turn for the better. His persistence in not

<sup>1</sup> The explanation (Karim, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49) that Farrukh Siyar was reconciled with Murshid Qulī Khān because, in view of the division of the Delhi court nobles into two hostile groups, the former was seeking for Bengal a non-partisan officer like Murshid Qulī Khān and because the latter was successful in "maintaining peace in the area under his jurisdiction" during the "two wars of succession", does not appear convincing. For the division of the court nobles into two hostile camps was rather a subsequent development; and Farrukh Siyar had no special reason to be happy with Murshid Qulī Khān's supposed maintenance of peace during the two wars of succession, in one of which the two were apparently ranged on opposite sides. Moreover, there was really no peace during that period; it was disturbed by the tripartite struggle between Murshid Qulī Khān, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Khān and Prince Farrukh Siyar; and, also, as an upshot of these, by the rebellion of Sitrām (see below).

yielding to the orders of his dismissal proved fruitful; for shortly after his accession Farrukh Siyar appointed him in April 1713 *dīwān* in the Coromandel coast. He left Hugli towards the end of June to take up his new assignment. His assistant, Kinkar Sen, is stated to have accompanied his patron but subsequently returned to Bengal where, it is further stated, Murshid Qulī Khān first excused him and appointed him revenue collector at Hugli but then at the end of one year arrested him on a charge of malversation of funds and threw him into prison where, it is said, he died on account of stomach troubles caused by a peculiar kind of laxative food supplied to him.<sup>1</sup> This tradition about Kinkar Sen has to be taken with caution, as Dr. Karim points out,<sup>2</sup> for the date of his death suggested by the above mentioned tradition does not tally with the information contained in the English records which show that Kinkar Sen was still alive and in the good book of Murshid Qulī Khān till as late as 1721.

### III: SĪTĀRĀM'S REBELLION

Scarcely had the trouble with Diyā' al-Dīn and Prince Farrukh Siyar been over when Murshid Qulī Khān's attention was drawn to the task of suppressing the rebellion of Sītārām, a zamindar in the south-eastern part of Jessore district, then included in a revenue and administrative division called Bhusna-Mahmūdābād. Sītārām's father was a petty revenue collector under the *faujdar* of Bhusna. Sītārām was allowed to continue in that post in view of his abilities and, according to one view, as a check against the recalcitrant Afghans who lived in the area.<sup>3</sup> He gradually established himself as a zamindar there and built for himself a fortified residence at Muḥammadpur, some fourteen miles to the south-east of modern Maḡurā town. Inscriptions found at two temples built by him at that place contain the dates 1621 and 1625 Śaka, corresponding to 1699 and 1703-4 A.C.<sup>4</sup> This fact shows that he established himself in the locality towards the

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, pp. 264-265.

<sup>2</sup> Karim, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>3</sup> *H.B.*, II., p. 416.

<sup>4</sup> Westland, *A Report on the District of Jessore, its antiquities, its history and its commerce*, second edition Calcutta, 1874, pp. 25-38.

closing years of the seventeenth and the early years of the eighteenth centuries. This was, as noted above, a troublous period marked by the easy-going vicereignty of Ibrāhīm Khān and the rebellion of Shovā Singh and Rahīm Afghan, followed by the conflict between Prince 'Azīm al-Shān ('Azīm al-Dīn) and the *dīwān* Kartalab Khān (Murshid Qulī Khān), the transfer of the revenue headquarters from Dacca to Murshidabad, the departure of the viceroy from Dacca to Patna, then Murshid Qulī Khān's absence from the province for more than two years (1708—1710) and the squabbles and quarrels among the local officials culminating in the murder of the *dīwān* Ḍiyā' Allah Khān and, finally, Murshid Qulī Khān's return to Bengal and his conflicts with Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Khān and Prince Farrukh Siyar. From 1690 to 1713, therefore, Bengal passed through a period of confusion and instability during which the administrators and officers were mainly preoccupied with the question of their personal position and security. Sītārām obviously took advantage of this unsettled state of affairs. By the time Murshid Qulī Khān was engaged in the last mentioned conflict Sītārām had already started defying the *faujdār* of Bhusna, withholding payment of revenue and plundering the neighbouring tracts with a band of armed men. It is stated that for sometime the *faujdār*, Abū Turāb, who was a Sayyid and related to the emperor's family, attempted without success to put down Sītārām.<sup>1</sup> The latter, being "sheltered by forests and rivers", avoided any direct confrontation with the *faujdār*'s forces but harassed him by surprise attacks and plundering raids. It appears that Murshid Qulī Khān did not or could not send any reinforcements to Abū Turāb who, left to his own limited resources, was one day ambushed and killed by Sītārām's men, most probably early in 1713.<sup>2</sup> This roused Murshid Qulī Khān to action. He appointed his brother-in-law Bakhsh 'Alī Khān *faujdār* of Bhusna and sent a contingent with him to suppress Sītārām. Orders were also given to all the *zamindars*, under threat of confiscation of their zamindari, to cooperate with Bakhsh 'Alī Khān and to prevent Sītārām's escape through their areas. They

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād.*, pp. 165-66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Most probably Abū Turāb belonged to the party of nobles opposed to Murshid Qulī Khān, for the *Riyād* (p. 265) stated that Abū Turāb "looked down upon" the latter.

readily cooperated with the *faujdār* who easily captured Sītārām and sent him in chains to Murshidabad where he was condemned to death and his body was hung on a tree on the high road from Murshidabad to Dacca as a warning to would-be rebels.<sup>1</sup> Some members of his family and male servants including two sons and a daughter took shelter in the English settlement at Calcutta in the quarters of the Company's *pātwārī* Rāmñāth.<sup>2</sup> Under Murshid Qulī Khān's orders they were made over by the English authorities and were sentenced to perpetual imprisonment. Sītārām's moveable properties were confiscated and his *zamindari* was given to Rāmjīvan,<sup>3</sup> brother of Murshid Qulī Khān's mint-officer Raghunandan.

Sītārām's rebellion was clearly a by-product of the troubles and preoccupations with which the provincial administration was beset at that time and, significantly, it coincided with Murshid Qulī Khān's conflict with Diyā' al-Dīn Khān on the one hand, and Prince Farrukh Siyar on the other. The very fact that Sītārām was easily suppressed when Murshid Qulī Khān turned his attention to him shows that he was not even very strong. By all contemporary and near-contemporary accounts he appears to be a small zamindar. Even the English at Calcutta, when asked to surrender Sītārām's family, referred to him as the "late Jamindaree [zamindar] of Boosnaly". Some modern Hindu nationalist writers have, however, found in him a great national hero, speaking of his zamindari, which never embraced more than a part of Jessore district, as "the last Hindu kingdom of Bengal" covering "about one-half of south Bengal".<sup>4</sup> There is nothing in the sources to support such an assumption. He was undoubtedly an ambitious person who clearly overrated both his own abilities and the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.267.

<sup>2</sup> *Consultations*, 11 February, 3,4,5 & 7 March, 1714, quoted in Karim, *op.cit.*, p.51.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād.*, p.267.

<sup>4</sup> Jadunath Sarkar in *H.B.II.*, p.416, following others like S.C. Mitra's treatment in his *History of Jessore-Khulna*, Part II (Bengali text). Sarkar's approach is very much characteristic of his self-inconsistency. He starts by describing Sītārām as "one among the zamindars crushed by Murshid Qulī Khān" (*ibid.*) and ends up by lamenting over the fall of what he calls "the last Hindu Kingdom of Bengal". Sarkar places Sītārām by the side of Pratāpāditya as the most "tragic figures in the history and popular tradition of this province", though, interestingly enough, Sarkar condemns Pratāpāditya earlier in the same book (pp.225-26) as nothing more than a "bloated" zamindar. Sarkar is also incorrect in stating Abū Turāb as the *faujdār* of Hugli.

troubles of the provincial administration. The very fact that all the other neighbouring zamindars cooperated with the administration for his suppression shows, as pointed out by one writer, that he could not even muster the support of any influential section of his own community. "His rising was thus only personal, it was no national rising."<sup>1</sup>

IV: MURSHID QULĪ KHĀN AS SUBĀHDĀR OF BENGAL:  
HIS ADMINISTRATIVE AND REVENUE MEASURES

Murshid Qulī Khān continued to be the *nā'ib-subāhdār* of Bengal, along with being its *dīwān* and the *dīwān* and *subāhdār* of Orissa till 1715-16 (1128 H.) when he was raised to the *subāhdārship* of Bengal too. This came about in consequence of a new turn in the court politics at Delhi. At the machinations of the Sayyid brothers Mīr Jumla, the nominal *subāhdār* of Bengal, was asked by the emperor to leave the court and to take up personally the administration of his province. Mīr Jumla apparently submitted to these orders, but on coming up to Patna he seized the Bengal revenues which were being sent to Delhi, paid his soldiers with the money and then returned to Delhi. Thereupon the emperor Farrukh Siyar dismissed him from the *subāhdārī* of Bengal and conferred it on Murshid Qulī Khān. This took place either late in 1716 or early in 1717, the exact date of appointment is not mentioned in the sources.<sup>2</sup> Murshid Qulī Khān thus became the *subāhdār* of Bengal in name which he had so long been in fact. In gratitude he sent a large amount of money and other things as present to the emperor. The latter in turn bestowed on him the title of *Mu'tamin al-Mulk 'Alā' al-Daulat Zafar Khān Bahādur Nāsir Jang* and raised his rank to "seven thousand."

Shortly after this event Shujā'at Khān and Najābat Khān, two Afghan zamindars of Tanki Sarabpur in *sarkār* Maḥmūdābād, near modern Jessore town, defied the local authorities and started raiding the neighbouring zamindaries.<sup>3</sup> Their insubordination was clearly a sequel to Sītārām's rebellion. Murshid Qulī Khān was now, however, far stronger and his lieutenant Aḥsan Allah

<sup>1</sup> K.P. Bandopadhyāya, *op.cit.*, p.81.

<sup>2</sup> See for discussion Karim, *op.cit.*, pp.54-56.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyāḍ*, pp. 278-80.



Khān, *faujdār* of Hugli, easily suppressed the rising and captured the two Afghan chiefs who were condemned to life imprisonment. Their zamindaries, too, were assigned to Rāmjivan.

In the meantime a series of palace revolutions had taken place at Delhi. In April 1719 emperor Farrukh Siyar was strangled to death by the Sayyid brothers who then placed Rafī' al-Darajat, a grandson of Bahādur Shāh I (by his son Rafī' al-Shāh) on the throne. After only two months, however, Rafī' al-Darajat was deposed and his elder brother Rafī' al-Daulat was raised to the throne in June 1719. Shortly afterwards in the same year both the brothers died and Prince Raushan Akhtar, another grandson of Bahādur Shāh came upon the throne and took the title of Muhammad Shāh.<sup>1</sup> He succeeded ultimately in overthrowing the Sayyid brothers in the following year and thus restoring some stability in the court politics which enabled him to remain on the throne till his death in 1748.

During these changes at Delhi Murshid Qulī Khān continued to send tributes and revenues to each succeeding emperor and was in turn confirmed in his position. Thus from 1713 to 1727, in which year he died, he remained rather in an undisturbed possession of Bengal and Orissa. Naturally the chief feature of his administration during this period was the concentration of powers in his hands. The process had actually started since the time of Aurangzeb, but it was under his weak successors that Murshid Qulī Khān established himself as the virtual ruler of these two provinces. Why he still continued to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Mughal emperor can only be guessed. Having passed the most formative and by far the greater part of his life under Aurangzeb, the awe and grandeur of the Mughal empire appears to have been deeply impressed on his mind so that he did not think in terms of throwing off his allegiance to it though, otherwise, he took all the care and steps not only to strengthen his hold but also to ensure the succession of his progeny to the rule of Bengal and Orissa. His administrative arrangements were geared to this end. Thus he had his son-in-law, Shujā' al-Dīn Muḥam-

<sup>1</sup> Two other phantom rulers, Nikusiyar and Ibrāhīm, were also placed on the throne in quick succession before Muhammad Shāh's accession.

mad Khān, appointed deputy *ṣūbahdār* of Orissa, while another relative, I'tisām Khān, was appointed deputy at Dacca.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the *faujdārs* of all important places were also Murshid Qulī Khān's relatives or chosen men. During Aurangzeb's time Sayyid Akram Khān had been appointed deputy *dīwān* of Bengal on Murshid Qulī Khān's recommendation. When he became *ṣūbahdār* of Bengal the same Sayyid Akram Khān was appointed *dīwān* of Bengal. After Sayyid Akram Khān's death Sayyid Rāḍī Khān, husband of Murshid Qulī Khān's granddaughter, was appointed *dīwān*; and, again, on the latter's death in 1720, Murshid Qulī Khān had his grandson, Mirzā Asad Allah, appointed *dīwān* of Bengal with the title of Sarfarāz Khān. Murshid Qulī Khān had no male issue; Sarfarāz Khān was the son of his only daughter Zīnat al-Nisā'. To secure Sarfarāz Khān's position Murshid Qulī Khān had also before his death purchased the zamindari of Ghunakhālī, near Murshidabad, in Sarfarāz Khān's name and had requested the emperor to appoint him *ṣūbahdār* of Bengal.

The same policy of securing his position by eliminating all possible opposition seems to have been responsible, at least partially, for his breaking up the influence of Muslim *jāgīrdārs* in east and central Bengal, though carried out apparently for the purpose of increasing the revenue. He resumed their *jāgīrs* to crown lands and had alternative *jāgīrs* granted to them in Orissa. With the exception of the key administrative posts all the subordinate posts, particularly in the revenue department, were also filled up by Hindu employees. Even some of the key posts in that branch of the administration were given to Hindus. According to the *Tawārikh-i-Bangālāh* this was done because it was easy to realize the dues from them.<sup>2</sup> The secretary of the treasury under Murshid Qulī Khān, and the secretary of his own financial affairs were respectively Bhupat Rāi and Krishna Rāi whom he brought from the Deccan after his visit to the emperor's court in 1703. The two auditor-generals, or *ṣadr qānungos*, were also Hindus, namely, Darpa Nārāyaṇ and Jai Nārāyaṇ. These two offices with their incumbents were of course created by Aurangzeb as checks

<sup>1</sup> Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 77.

on the provincial *dīwān*'s powers prior to Murshid Qulī Khān's coming to Bengal. The latter not only retained them in their offices, but also, according to one suggestion,<sup>1</sup> won over to his side the senior and more capable of them, Darpa Nārāyan, by entrusting him with the secretaryship of the treasury as well when Bhupat Rāi died sometime after 1714. Similarly Murshid Qulī Khān's superintendent (*dārogha*) of the mint was also a Hindu named Raghunandan.

Murshid Qulī Khān's revenue administration was aimed at (a) securing an increase in the revenue without imposing an extra burden on the *ra'yats*; (b) ensuring regularity in the collection; and (c) protecting the *ra'yats* from any oppressive demands by the revenue-collecting agencies like the *āmils* and the *zamindars*. These were precisely the objects which the emperor Aurangzeb himself had in view and about which he had repeatedly reminded his viceroys from Shāista Khān onwards.<sup>2</sup> In fact Murshid Qulī Khān's measures were in essence a continuation and completion of a policy outlined by his predecessors. He did not bring about any fundamental or drastic change in the revenue administration. Within the framework of the existing system he skilfully managed to achieve the above mentioned objects with considerable success. Nor were his measures adopted all at a time. Some of them were carried out early in his career as Aurangzeb's *dīwān* in the eastern provinces, while the others were completed rather late in his (Murshid Qulī Khān's) life when he was the *sūbahdār* of Bengal with others like Rāḍī Khān and Sarfaraḥ Khān as the nominal *dīwāns*.

Mismanagement in the revenue administration of the province since the time of Ibrāhīm Khān and the consequent fall in its revenue remittance, even after the appointment of two joint *ṣadr qānungos*, had led Aurangzeb to send Murshid Qulī Khān there as the *dīwān*. One of the latter's earliest measures was therefore the preparation, with the help of existing records and the assistance of his officers, of a comprehensive revenue-roll of both

<sup>1</sup> Karim, *op.cit.*, p.68. Dr. Karim shows that the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh*'s story of Murshid Qulī Khān's having entertained an ill-feeling towards Darpa Narain for a long time and ultimately punished him is untenable.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 427-430.

the land revenue and the *sair* (customs and other) taxes. Thus alone could he ascertain the exact amount of revenue obtainable from the province. He completed this work rather expeditiously and then took fresh undertakings from the zamindars, binding them to collect the land revenue in accordance with the roll and to make payments to the treasury by fixed periodical instalments. It appears that some of the zamindars, whose interests were adversely affected by these initial measures, objected to these proceedings and managed to take their case to the emperor, complaining of oppression and injustice on Murshid Qulī Khān's part. On being called upon to explain his conduct the latter satisfactorily explained that "after reaching Dacca he took security-bonds from the contractors of the revenue collection and fixed the periodical instalments payable by them at the prayer of the cultivators and following the practice of the late diwan Kifayet Khan."<sup>1</sup> This shows that Murshid Qulī Khān was then just systematizing the existing system following the practice of his predecessors, and that this measure, namely the taking of security-bonds from and the fixation of the periodical instalments payable by the revenue contractors were made "at the prayer of the cultivators". It also shows that Murshid Qulī Khān regarded the zamindars as "contractors of revenue collection." During the same initial period he carried out another important measure alluded to above, that of resuming the *jāgīrs* in Bengal to crown lands and allotting to the *jāgīrdārs* alternative *jāgīrs* in Orrisa. By these two measures Murshid Qulī Khān was able to effect an immediate increase in the revenue receipts, not by any increased demand on the cultivators, but by systematizing and regularizing collection and payment by the zamindars. In continuation of these two measures Murshid Qulī Khān carried out later on in his life a more comprehensive survey of land and settlement of revenue, which was completed by 1722, when Bengal was divided into 13 *chāklās* or revenue divisions.

<sup>1</sup> *Ahkām*, 217b and 220a, translated and quoted by J.N. Sarkar in *H.B.II*, p.411. Sarkar interprets the evidence as a "radical change" whereby Murshid Qulī Khān dispossessed the old zamindars and created a new class of revenue contractors. The context does not, however, support such an interpretation. There is no mention of dispossessing old zamindars and giving contracts to a completely new set of people.

According to Salim Allah, Murshid Qulī Khān sent to each *paraganah* (revenue division) efficient surveyors and other officers who "measured the cultivated and fallow lands, village by village, plot by plot and *ray'at* by *ra'yat* and thus completed a settlement.... After preparing a comparative statement of the past and present [*hast wa būd*], a draft schedule of income, section by section, was brought to hand."<sup>1</sup> The author further states that at the time of making this survey and settlement the zamindars were kept under restraint.<sup>2</sup> Obviously this restriction refers to those who did not cooperate with the survey operations or whose presence in their respective areas was considered a hindrance to the work. The survey was fairly comprehensive embracing almost all the areas of the *sūbah*, though, by the very nature of the country, some areas had to be left out of its scope. Salīm Allah makes particular mention in this connection of Birbhum and Bishnupur, the former being excluded from the survey and settlement because, he says, its zamindar, Asad Allah, was a pious man who had granted lands for religious purposes; while the latter, Bishnupur, was left out because it was inaccessible, being full of jungles.<sup>3</sup> It is mentioned, however, that the *chāklā* (division) of Midnapur was detached from Orissa and attached to Bengal. It appears that by doing so Murshid Qulī Khān wanted to make Bengal into a compact revenue province directly under him, leaving Orissa mainly under the care of the *jāgirdārs* for revenue purposes; for otherwise there was no real need to detach the *chāklā* of Midnapur from Orissa, Murshid Qulī Khān being also the *dīwān* and *sūbahdār* of that province as well. This inference is supported also by the fact that nothing is heard about his revenue measures there; nor does he appear to have any separate *dīwān* appointed there, as he did in the case of Bengal when he became its *sūbahdār*. Be that as it may, by the above mentioned measures Murshid Qulī Khān was indeed able to effect an increase in the revenue. Thus whereas the total revenue of the province according to Prince Shujā's settlement of 1658 A.C. was rupees

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 131a, quoted in Karim, *op.cit.*, p.77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 32a.

1,31,15,907, the total under Murshid Qulī Khān reached 1,41,88,186,<sup>1</sup> showing an increase of some eleven *lakhs* (1100,000) of rupees. Considering the fact that many Bengal *jāgīrs* were resumed to crown lands and that some districts were also attached to Bengal from Orissa, the increase does not appear to be unusual; and it may be reasonably assumed that the rate of revenue continued to be more or less the same under Murshid Qulī Khān as it was before him, namely one-fourth to one-third of the produce of land.<sup>2</sup> Even this amount does not appear to have been fully realized in any year so that it most probably represents "valuation" rather than "demand". If Murshid Qulī Khān increased the rate in any place, it was most probably with regard to those lands which were previously underassessed and whose productivity now increased because of improvement effected by the grant of loans or *ṭaqāwī* to cultivators, of which Salīm Allāh makes special mention in connection with the survey and settlement.<sup>3</sup> The only instance of an extra tax or *abwāb* created by Murshid Qulī Khān was the *abwāb-i-Khāsnawīsī* or commission for the clerks of the *dīwānī* department.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately its size is not on record. On the other hand he abolished all illegal cesses.

The increase in the revenue under Murshid Qulī Khān was, as mentioned above, the result of regular and systematic collection rather than of any extra imposition on the people. In fact the guiding principle of his revenue administration was to protect the *ra'yats* from any illegal or extortionate demands by the revenue collectors. And to ensure this he was unsparing in his vigilance and uncompromising with those who transgressed the rules in this respect. The work of collection was done by a class of agents (not farmers of revenue on the basis of the highest bid in auction) who came to be known as *zamindars*; and by a class of officials headed by the *āmils* and assisted by others like the *qānungos* and the *mutasaddis*. The *āmīl* was the chief collecting officer over a revenue division called *sarkār* or *chāklāh*. In the sources the *āmils*

<sup>1</sup> James Grant, *Analysis of the Finances of Bengal*, Appendix 4 to *Fifth Report*, pp. 182-186, 189-191. This figure is almost the same as mentioned by Salīm Allāh, *T.B.* p.38b.

<sup>2</sup> See for discussion Karīm, *op.cit.*, pp.85-90.

<sup>3</sup> *T.B.*, f.31a.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, f.38b.

and the zamindars are almost always mentioned together, though the exact nature of their relationship is nowhere clearly stated. It appears that the *'āmil*s, like the British "District Collectors" of later days, exercised a supervisory function over the zamindars and received revenues from them. The *'āmil*s also coordinated and supervised the collection of revenue by his subordinate officials like the *qānungos*, *'amīns*, etc. for lands held directly under the government and not included in any zamindari. Murshid Qulī Khān exercised strict personal control over both the zamindars and the various officials. It is stated that he inspected the receipts and the disbursements and signed the ledgers daily. At the end of every month the various revenue collecting agencies, mainly, the zamindars, *'āmil*s, *qānungos*, etc. were required to render an account and if any one was found in default or guilty of other irregularities, he was kept in confinement and was variously punished,<sup>1</sup> the habitually defaulting zamindars being dispossessed of their zamindaris. Mention has already been made about the fixation of periodical instalments for the facility of both zamindars and *ra'yats*. It appears that for the same purpose of maintaining regularity in collection Murshid Qulī Khān introduced an year-ending ceremony called *Pūnya*, which was held on the first day of the first Bengali month *Baisākh* (April-May). On that occasion the yearly accounts were brought to a close and the balance-sheet was prepared, after which the imperial revenues were despatched to the emperor.<sup>2</sup> It may be noted that the date of the *Pūnya* ceremony coincided with the end of the main harvesting season in Bengal.

Murshid Qulī Khān was constantly vigilant about the interests of the *ra'yats*. The zamindars and the *'āmil*s were bound by the revenue-roll and none was allowed a free hand to deal with the *ra'yats*. While the *'āmil*s and other officials of the revenue department received regular salaries from the state, the zamindars received as their remuneration *nānkar* or subsistence allowance in the shape of land or a specified percentage of the revenue. Salīm Allah categorically states that Murshid Qulī Khān "curtailed the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 38a.

influence of the zamindars upon the receipt and disbursement of the revenues." Both Salīm Allah and the *Aḥkām* make it clear that the zamindars were required to enter into an agreement and give a bond to abide by the revenue roll and not to oppress the *ra'yats*. Only those zamindars who agreed to work according to the new settlement were allowed to continue as such. It may be assumed that the rebellion of Sītārām and some other zamindars were at least partially due to such curtailment of their powers. Murshid Qulī Khān did not remain idle by simply laying down the rules and taking bonds from the zamindars. He looked to it that these were scrupulously obeyed. Any one who transgressed the rules was subjected to exemplary punishment. It is recorded by Salīm Allah that such was the dread of the Nawwāb's punishment for such offences that the zamindars and the *āmils* used to keep their representatives (*wakīls*) posted at Murshidabad to be constantly on the look-out for any possible or prospective complainant and to satisfy him beforehand by any means, for if a well-founded complaint reached Murshid Qulī Khān's ear the offender was sure to get severe punishment.<sup>1</sup>

In emphasizing this aspect of Murshid Qulī Khān's revenue administration Salīm Allah makes some statements which have led subsequent writers to assume that Murshid Qulī Khān was an oppressor of the zamindars on whom he inflicted even barbarous punishments. Thus speaking about the punishment for defaulters Salīm Allah writes that according to popular tradition Murshid Qulī Khān's *dīwān* Rādī Khān invented an ingenious method of punishing them, that of throwing them in pits filled with filth which he derisively termed *vaikunth*, the Sanskrit word for paradise.<sup>2</sup> It may be mentioned that Rādī Khān was *dīwān* for a very short period, from 1717 to 1719, so that the unnatural practice, if at all, could have existed for that period only. Fortunately, however, Salīm Allah takes care to mention that it was only a popular tradition. It may be assumed that Murshid Qulī Khān's strict justice naturally gave rise to exaggerated popular legends about him. This seems to be the case with at least

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 68b.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 45b.



another such statement of Salīm Allāh which says that those of the defaulting zamindars who did not make payments even after the various punishments were, along with their wives and children, converted to Islam.<sup>1</sup> The author does not cite a single instance of such forcible conversion. Had it ever been so, as one writer very aptly points out,<sup>2</sup> at least the rebel zamindar Sītārām's family would have been converted to Islam; and that so many of Murshid Qulī Khān's Hindu officials, who were by no means helpless spectators and totally indifferent to their religion, would not have cooperated with him. It may also be added that if there was any such instance of forcible conversion it would have found some mention in the records of the contemporary European traders, particularly of the English traders, who were rather careful observers of the local scene.

Another erroneous view about Murshid Qulī Khān, advanced by Jadunath Sarkar, is that he dispossessed "the old landed proprietors of Bengal, called zamindars" and gave contracts for the collection of revenue to a class of people called *ījāradārs* or farmers who were not of princely birth but were "merely glorified civil servants paid by a percentage on their collections." Sarkar calls this the *māldāminī* system and states that Murshid Qulī Khān "thus created a new landed aristocracy in Bengal whose position was confirmed and made hereditary by Lord Cornwallis."<sup>3</sup> The statement is based on the above noted evidence of the *Aḥkām-i-Ālamgiri* relating to some complaints about Murshid Qulī Khān and his explanation in reply that he was merely taking "security bonds from the contractors of the revenue collection" etc.<sup>4</sup> Even taking this evidence at its face value, it only shows that immediately on his arrival in Bengal Murshid Qulī Khān attempted to regularize the collection of revenue by making the zamindars, whom he regarded as the contractors of revenue, conform to the existing rules with regard to the rate of revenue and the rights of the *ra'yats*, as was indeed sought to be done by

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, f.37a.

<sup>2</sup> K.P. Bandopādhyāya, *op.cit.*, p.89.

<sup>3</sup> *H.B.II.*, pp.409-410.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra.*, p.548.

his predecessor Kifāyat Khān. There is nothing in this piece of information to suggest that Murshid Qulī Khān took so sweeping a measure immediately on his arrival as that of making a completely new settlement by overthrowing the existing zamindars. Most of his well-known revenue measures were adopted much later in his life; and the few known instances of dispossession of zamindars also fall in that later period and they were all the result of either non-payment of revenue, or insubordination. Neither the evidence of the *Ahkām-i-‘Ālamgīrī* nor that provided by Salīm Allāh warrants the assumption of a systematic policy of dispossession of old zamindars. The only systematic dispossession that took place during Murshid Qulī Khān's time was with regard to the Muslim *jāgīrdārs*, as mentioned above, who were dispossessed of their Bengal *jāgīrs* and given alternative and less productive *jāgīrs* in Orissa. Most of these Bengal *jāgīrs* were resumed to crown lands; some might have been entrusted to zamindars for the purpose of revenue collection. But then Sarkar's assumption does not have in view these *jāgīrdārs*. Nor were the zamindars on the eve of Murshid Qulī Khān's arrival in Bengal "proprietors" of land, as supposed by Sarkar, who also describes them as "decayed scions of old Hindu ruling houses" or "descendants of the hereditary local officials and barons of the old Hindu and Muslim dynasties of the days before the coming of the Mughal sovereignty."<sup>1</sup> If the allusion is to the *Bāra Bhuiyāns* and other petty chiefs who rose on the ruins of the Karrānī (Afghan) state of Bengal, (and there was none else who could by any stretch of imagination be referred to as the old Hindu ruling families in Bengal prior to the coming of the Mughal sovereignty), it must at once be pointed out that excepting the Afghan chieftain of Hijli, all the others including Pratāpāditya of Jessore, Rāmchandra of Barisal and Ananta Mānikya of Bhulua (Noakhali), were ousted and their territories annexed during Islām Khān Chishtī's time.<sup>2</sup> Even those who were pardoned or subsequently released from imprisonment were merely recruited in the imperial service. Sarkar himself earlier describes Pratāpāditya and the others as "not

<sup>1</sup> *H. B. II.*, pp. 409.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra.*, pp. 308, 310-312.

tribal heads, nor scions of any old and decayed royal house" but "at best bloated zamindars."<sup>1</sup> The class of people who later on became known as zamindars were a different set of people. They were in fact revenue collecting agents receiving commission in the form of a fixed percentage of the revenue or some lands commensurate with that. They were never recognized as proprietors of the land for which they collected the revenue. It may be pointed out in this connection that even the *jāgīrdārs*, who were the main props of the administration and many of whom enjoyed their *jāgīrs* in hereditary succession, were not treated as proprietors of the *jāgīrs* and could be ousted or given alternative *jāgīrs*, as was indeed done during Murshid Qulī Khān's time. They were also to collect the revenue of their *jāgīrs* according to the standard and specified rates, and any remainder of the revenue over and above their *rankha* (remuneration) was to be submitted to the state. Thus throughout this period, including the time of Murshid Qulī Khān, the revenue from *jāgīr* lands formed a substantial part of the total revenue and was always shown separately in the accounts. This being the case with regard to the *jāgīrdārs*, it could scarcely be imagined that the Mughal emperors condescended to alienate the proprietorship of vast tracts of lands among the zamindars. Constitutionally, *jāgīrs* were granted by the emperors, whereas the zamindars were engaged by the viceroys, or more correctly, by the *diwāns*, who being themselves *jāgīrdārs*<sup>2</sup> and revenue administrators, did not have the authority to grant "proprietorship" of land to zamindars. Nor should the zamindars be confused with the *peshkash*-paying or tributary frontier chieftains, like those of Kuch Bihar and Tippera who, according to Ṣalīm Allāh, continued to send tributes to Murshid Qulī Khān.<sup>3</sup> What the latter in fact did was that he merely dispossessed those zamindars only who withheld payment or refused to abide by the rules regarding the rates and oppressed the *ra'yats*, or who

<sup>1</sup> H.B.II., p. 226. See also *supra*, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> The *nāzim*, the *diwān* and some other high officials were granted *jāgīrs* in the provinces where they were appointed to realize their emoluments therefrom. Even during Murshid Qulī Khān's time the *nāzim's* and the *diwān's* *jāgīrs* in Bengal were not disturbed, whereas the other *jāgīrdārs* had their *jāgīrs* transferred to Orissa.

<sup>3</sup> T.B., f. 36a.

proved themselves recalcitrant or rebellious. And whenever such dispossession took place Murshid Qulī Khān is found invariably settling the zamindari on a Hindu in preference to any Muslim, even when the dispossessed zamindar was a Muslim. In fact some of the big Hindu zamindaries came into being as a result of this policy. Before long these zamindars, along with the other Hindu officials and financial magnates, emerged as an influential group relegating the Muslim nobility in the background. Even then, these were not exactly the zamindars "whose position was confirmed and made hereditary by Lord Cornwallis." At least three distinctions must be borne in mind in this connection. Cornwallis's settlement of 1793 was made with a class of revenue farmers, *not hereditary* zamindars, who had come into being largely replacing the latter by making the highest bids in successive auctions of the land revenue held between 1770 and 1790. Neither under Murshid Qulī Khān nor under any other Nawwāb was there any public auction of the land revenue or a settlement of the zamindari (revenue-collecting right) on the basis of the highest bid, public or private. Secondly, the zamindars under the Nawwābs, specially under Murshid Qulī Khān, were never recognized as proprietors of the land under their charge, though some of them, like many Mughal officials and *jāgīrdārs*, enjoyed their privilege in hereditary succession. Cornwallis's settlement, on the other hand, recognized the revenue farmers who were holding a ten-yearly contract by virtue of the auction of 1789, as proprietors of the lands for which they had taken the contract to collect the revenue. Thirdly, and this was the most drastic of all the changes, Cornwallis's settlement fixed only the government demand from the zamindars, leaving them free to realize as much as they could from the *ra'yats* and, for facilitating the task of collection, also invested the zamindars with arbitrary powers of arrest, distraint of property and eviction of the *ra'yat* from the land without reference to any court of law whatsoever. On the other hand, by all accounts the zamindars under Murshid Qulī Khān were strictly required to collect only a specified rate of revenue from the *ra'yats*, and were not in any way given a free hand to deal with the latter. We hear only of the arrests and

evictions of the zamindars, not of the *ra'yats*, under Murshid Qulī Khān. Far from confirming anything, Cornwallis's settlement just reversed the whole position. It transformed an upstart class of revenue farmers, not hereditary zamindars, into permanent proprietors of land, and reduced the *ra'yats*, who were the practical owners of the land under the Nawwābs, to a lot worse than that of the serfs of Europe during the later middle and the early modern ages. The British Indian authorities did in the long run realize this grievous blunder of Cornwallis and attempted in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to rectify some of the worst aspects of the system, curbing the powers of the zamindars and affording some relief to the *ra'yats*. It was then that the zamindars attempted to maintain their vested interests undiminished by raising the plea that their "proprietary" and other "rights" were historical in origin, dating from the time of the Nawwābs. Jadunath Sarkar's statement seems to be a confusing assortment of this nineteenth century zamindari apology with the not too clear evidence of the *Aḥkām-i-Ālamgīrī*.

#### V: MURSHID QULĪ KHĀN AND THE EUROPEAN TRADERS

All the European traders who had already been in Bengal, namely the Danes, the Dutch, the English and the French, continued to carry on their trade in the province during Murshid Qulī Khān's time except that the first named nation, having fallen out with the local authorities, withdrew from the country in 1714. On the other hand the Ostenders made their appearance in Bengal towards the end of Murshid Qulī Khān's rule and faced the combined opposition of the English and the Dutch.

In general Murshid Qulī Khān's relation with these foreign traders was guided mainly by the consideration for collecting regular customs revenue from them. As such it followed more or less the same pattern as characterized the policies of his predecessors. He also treated them equally without showing any special favour to any of them although, because of the difference in the privileges which the European nations had been enjoying prior to his coming to Bengal, he did not or could not realize customs at the same rate from all of them. Some amount of complications

were also caused by the rivalry and hostility among the European traders themselves.

Of the three principal European nations then trading in Bengal, the Dutch and the French continued to carry on their trade by paying the usual customs according to the terms of the grants which they had previously obtained and also by regularizing their position by obtaining fresh grants whenever there was a change of ruler. Thus the Dutch, who had obtained from emperor Aurangzeb in 1663 a *farmān* allowing them to trade in the Mughal empire on payment of 3½% customs, continued to do so till the general embargo on European trading in the Mughal dominions imposed by Aurangzeb in 1701 in consequence of indiscriminate piracy committed on the Mughal ships in the Indian ocean allegedly by the Europeans.<sup>1</sup> After the withdrawal of the embargo at the beginning of 1703 the Dutch obtained from Murshid Qulī Khān in 1704 a fresh *parwāna* confirming their former privileges.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, when Bahādur Shāh succeeded to the throne they obtained from him in the second year of his reign (1708) a new *farmān* for their trade in the Mughal empire. This *farmān* reduced the rate of customs payable by them from 3½% to 2½%<sup>3</sup> and in conformity with this they also obtained two *parwānas* from the provincial authorities, one from the then *dīwān* Diyā' Allah Khān, and the other from the deputy *ṣubahdār* Sayyid Husain 'Alī Khān, specifically for their trade in Bengal, Bihār and Orissa.<sup>4</sup> Again, on the accession of both Jahāndār Shāh and Farrukh Siyar they obtained a new *farmān* from each of them<sup>5</sup> and also a *parwāna* from Murshid Qulī Khān<sup>6</sup> confirming their trade privileges. These grants were obtained without much negotiations, unlike the case with the English, and on payment of the usual sums required on such occasions, though the exact amounts paid cannot be ascertained satisfactorily from the sources.

Similarly the French, who had obtained a *farmān* from empe-

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, 560.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, I., 170.

<sup>3</sup> British Museum Add. MSS. 29095, pp. 41-42, quoted in Karim, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Stapel, *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico Indicum*, Vol. IV., pp. 292, 298-300, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 195-196.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

ror Aurangzeb in 1692-93 on similar terms as those granted to the Dutch, continued to trade on payment of 3½% customs. During Murshid Qulī Khān's time they had their privileges confirmed by at least a fresh *farmān* from emperor Farrūk Siyar in 1718 and a new *parwāna* from Murshid Qulī Khān in 1722.<sup>1</sup> As in the case of the Dutch, the rate of customs payable by the French was also reduced by this time from 3½% to 2½%. The French trade in Bengal did not however prosper like that of either the Dutch or the English.

The English, who had already established themselves as the most favoured European nation in Bengal by virtue of emperor Aurangzeb's *farmān* of 1690, attempted to further enlarge their privileges and consequently their negotiations with the local authorities were protracted. As noted earlier, Aurangzeb's *farmān* of 1690 allowed them to trade freely in Bengal and Orissa in lieu of an yearly payment of 3000 rupees and granted them the privilege of issuing *dastakhs* (clearance certificates) showing that the goods carried in a vessel belonged to the Company. They had also obtained zamindari rights over the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindpur and had fortified their settlements there. During Murshid Qulī Khān's time they further improved their position, after some initial difficulties, and by the end of the period emerged as the most powerful European nation in Bengal ready to take part in the country's politics.

#### (a) *The initial difficulties of the English*

The difficulties of the English position in Bengal early during Murshid Qulī Khān's time were caused mainly by differences amongst themselves. In 1698 king William III, in consideration for a handsome loan from the promoters, granted charter to a new company to trade with the eastern countries, calling it "The English Company trading to the East Indies" and obliging the old company to accept the more modest title of "The London Company". The English king also sent his ambassador, Sir William Norris, to the Mughal court for obtaining trade privileges for the new company and recognition for them as the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.201.

representative of the English nation in the East Indies.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the agents of the new company, headed by Sir Edward Littleton, arrived in Bengal and after making a handsome payment to the *sūbahdār*, Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn, obtained his permission to trade there "on the same terms as granted to the interlopers, that is, to pay three thousand rupees for permission to make sales and purchases for each ship, and [to] give security for six thousand more should the ambassador not procure a Phirmaund [*farmān*] within the year."<sup>2</sup> (1699-1700).

The *farmān* was not procured within that year or the following few years, for the Norris embassy to Aurangzeb's court was a failure mainly on account of the indiscriminate piracy to which Mughal ships were then subjected in the Indian ocean. It was alleged that the English were parties to the piracies, and the allegation was more or less confirmed by the President of the new company at Surat who informed the Mughal government that the servants of the old company were responsible for such activities.<sup>3</sup> The result was that the emperor, far from being favourably disposed to the new company, obliged William Norris to leave the court without achieving anything and out of disgust issued a general proclamation at the end of 1701 interdicting European trading in the Mughal dominions. The embargo could, however, be only partially enforced in Bengal so far at least as the English were concerned, for the old English company were rather strongly entrenched at Calcutta, commanding the approaches of the Hugli river. Also the *dīwān* (Murshid Qulī Khān) and the *nazīm* (Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn) had just at that juncture of time fallen out amongst themselves following the *naqdī* soldiers' incident<sup>4</sup> so that they could not devote their concerted attention to the matter. Hence though some of the out-factories of the old company at Patna, Rajmahal and Kasimbazar were sealed up, the

<sup>1</sup> Bruce, III, 281.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 415, 450. It is stated that the *sūbahdār* received 70,000 rupees; but this seems to be an exaggeration in view of the subsequent English unwillingness to pay a much smaller amount for considerably more extended privileges. Most probably a sum of 15000 rupces was paid on that occasion. See *infra* pp. 561-562.; also see *H.M.S.* 628(23).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 324, 328.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra*, pp. 527-528.



*faujdar* of Hugli could not take any effective action against the English at Calcutta. Even the attempt to stop the passage of the company's boats down the river had to be given up because of the English counter-action in preventing the Mughal ships from sailing up and down Calcutta. And although Murshid Qulī Khān intended to enforce the emperor's orders, Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn intervened in favour of the English. The uneasy situation was, however, ended shortly afterwards when the emperor lifted the embargo towards the end of 1702.

Shortly before the embargo was withdrawn the two English companies had been united in England by a "Charter of Union" dated 22 July 1702 and were renamed as "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies." The union was effected in view of the failure of the Norris embassy and the various other difficulties arising out of the existence of two separate companies of the same nation trading in the same area. It was also expected, as subsequent developments show, that since the old company had already obtained substantial privileges in Bengal, the united company would continue to enjoy them. With the withdrawal of the embargo, therefore, the representatives of the two companies in Bengal took steps in 1703 to carry out the union there. On his part Murshid Qulī Khān, while allowing the European traders to resume their trading activities as usual, demanded from them the payment of the sums already due from them in respect of customs and other charges. The exact amount demanded from the English is variously stated in the records of the two companies,<sup>1</sup> but none was ultimately paid.<sup>2</sup> Murshid Qulī

<sup>1</sup> The agent of the old company stated it to be 20,000 rupees, while that of the new company stated it to be 15,000 rupees - Bruce, I, 507 and 525.

<sup>2</sup> See below. Dr. A. Karim, on the basis of a rather ambiguous statement of Bruce (I, 525), states that the new company "actually paid Rs. 15,000 to the Prince ['Azīm al-Dīn] and obtained permission for trade on the same terms as the old company enjoyed". (Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 107). And a little later, while discussing the position of the two companies on the eve of the union, Dr. Karim further states: "In 1702, the New Company also got the same privilege, after paying Rs. 15,000 to the *Subahdar*." (*Ibid.*, 109). The only payment by the new company to the prince for permission to trade appears to have been made prior to the imposition of the embargo by the emperor and while the Norris embassy was still engaged at his court. There was no question of seeking or granting trade permission in 1702 because the imperial embargo was not withdrawn till the end of that year, and because the new company had shortly before that obtained the Prince's permission by making him a payment. Nor could the new company conceivably seek such separate permission after the withdrawal of the embargo, because by that time the two companies had already been united in England (on 22 July 1702) and instructions received in Bengal for carrying out the union. Most =

Khān's attention was, however, more engaged in other urgent revenue measures after settling which he started for Aurangzeb's court sometime in the middle of 1703. He did not return to Bengal till May 1704. During his absence the representatives of the two companies in Bengal completed the work of union between them.<sup>1</sup>

When Murshid Qulī Khān returned to Bengal the English approached him for a new *parwāna* recognizing the united company as successor of the old company and also seeking an extension of their privileges so as to embrace the province of Bihar in addition to Bengal and Orissa.<sup>2</sup> Murshid Qulī Khān did not readily accord such recognition and claimed the sums already due from the two companies. The English records do not clearly state the specific heads under which the demand was made; but it appears that the amount claimed was a total of both the yearly *peshkash* payable by the old company and the sums which the new company had undertaken in 1699-1700 to pay as customs if they failed to procure an imperial *farmān* in their favour within that year. Murshid Qulī Khān also pointed out that Aurangzeb's *farmān* of 1690 and the then Bengal *dīwān* Kifāyet Khān's *parwāna* based on it applied only to the provinces of Bengal and Orissa. Therefore if the English wanted their privileges extended to the province of Bihar they were to obtain an imperial *farmān* to that effect. Negotiations over these points were inconclusively carried on with Murshid Qulī Khān till Aurangzeb's death in 1707.<sup>3</sup> Naturally such negotiations were intensified each year at the approach of the shipping season when the English feared that the *dīwān* would not allow their goods to be shipped if his claims were not settled. Murshid Qulī Khān did not however adopt any such coercive measure, and from 1704 to 1707 the English goods were duly transported from the various factories, including that of Patna in Bihar, and were shipped on payment at Hugli of only the yearly *peshkash* of 3000 rupees, as was payable by the old

= probably the sum of 15,000 rupees was paid to the prince on the first occasion, instead of the exaggerated amount of 70,000 rupees.

<sup>1</sup> *Consultations*, 24 February, 1704; *Wilson*, I., 252-253.

<sup>2</sup> *Consultations*, 14 June, 1704.

<sup>3</sup> See for details of these negotiations Karim, *op.cit.*, 111-120.

company.<sup>1</sup> It thus appears that although Murshid Qulī Khān did not formally recognize the union of the two companies, he tacitly allowed the united company to function as successor of the old company, with their privileges extended to Bihar as well.

VI: THE INTERVAL OF MURSHID QULĪ KHAN'S ABSENCE FROM BENGAL  
1708—1710

The death of Aurangzeb early in 1707 considerably altered the situation in that the privileges enjoyed by the foreign traders, including the English, now needed reconfirmation by the succeeding sovereign and that Murshid Qulī Khān himself was soon afterwards transferred from Bengal. The English, however, took advantage of the war of succession that followed immediately after Aurangzeb's death to strengthen their military position at Calcutta. The "emperor being dead", so run their records, "and now being the properest time to strengthen our fort, whilst there is an interregnum and no one likely to take notice of what we are doing", they considerably extended and strengthened their fortifications at Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> After the end of the war of succession and the accession of Bahādur Shāh a new *dīwān*, Diyā' Allah Khān, took over in Bengal in April 1708. Acting under his instructions the *faujdar* of Hugli asked the local merchants not to deal with the English pending the latter's obtaining a new *sanad* or trade permit.<sup>3</sup> Thereupon the English opened negotiations with the *dīwān* and informed the Hugli *faujdar* about these proceedings<sup>4</sup> by way of disarming his opposition. The latter seems to have then relaxed the restrictions. The negotiations with the *dīwān* were however protracted and revolved mainly round the question of the amount to be paid as consideration for such a *sanad*, the *dīwān* seemingly trying to get as much, while the English naturally seeking to pay as little as possible. We have no information from the Mughal side; but the *wakils* (negotiators) of the English variously stated the amount as between 35,000 and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120-124. See also *Consultations*, 3 and 6 April 1704; 23 and 26 April 1705, and 22 April, 1706.

<sup>2</sup> *Consultations*, 28 April, 1708.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 April and 12 July, 1708.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 April 1708.

150,000 rupees.<sup>1</sup> Two things are however clear from the records of the English themselves. First, the other European traders, particularly the Dutch, promptly met the legal requirement by obtaining a new *sanad* from the *dīwān* on payment of about 35,000 rupees.<sup>2</sup> It might be observed that since the English trade in Bengal was in no way greater at that time than that of the Dutch, it was unlikely that a larger amount should have been demanded from the former. Secondly, the English carried on their negotiations with an awareness of the gradual weakening of the Mughal empire and of their own strengthened position at Calcutta. Hence they rather purposely prolonged negotiations and expected the Hugli *faujdār* to continue to pass their goods for shipment, using or threatening to use force if he put what they called "hindrances" on their trade. Thus while in July 1708 the *faujdār* put under restraint some of the local agents of the English for their attempt to pass the English goods without the payment of customs, the English council at Calcutta ordered their guards to be ready to meet any emergency and summoned "all the European and Christian inhabitants and masters of ships" to go to Hugli with the ships "to prevent any insolence" on the *faujdār's* part, "or in case there should be occasion to do anything against him."<sup>3</sup> The situation was eased however by the mediation of two of the deputy *ṣūbahdār's* officers who persuaded the English, on the one hand, not to send their ships to Hugli, and the *faujdār*, on the other, to release the men and to clear the goods. The latter did so and allowed another month's time to the English to obtain the *dīwān's sanad*.<sup>4</sup> Negotiations with the *dīwān* did not however come to any fruitful conclusion within that time and once again there were troubles at Hugli in November (1708) when the English made a greater show of force including the summoning of "all the subjects of Great Britain" employed in the local shipping ("Moors and Gentue shipping") and ordered them to "immediately repair to the King's colours and settlement of Great Britain in Calcutta".<sup>5</sup> Once again the show of force worked. The

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 August, 27 October and 27 November, 1708.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 August, 1708.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 and 10 July, 1708.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 and 26 July, and 9 August, 1708.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 November, 1708.

*faujdār* gave in and also offered himself to negotiate for procuring the necessary grants from both the *ṣūbahdār* and the *dīwān* if only the English "would give thirtyfive thousand rupees".<sup>1</sup> In reply they informed him that they would pay the amount after he had obtained the grants.<sup>2</sup>

The repeated show of force by the English and their apparently wilful delay in regularizing their position had in the meantime tired the patience of the deputy *ṣūbahdār*, Prince Farrukh Siyar who now took up the matter. Realizing the English strength at Calcutta and the vulnerability of the Hugli *faujdār* to their pressure, the prince had the English boats coming from Patna stopped at Rajmahal where neither the English ships nor their troops could be sent, and arrested the English factor at that place. The prince then demanded the immediate payment of 14,000 rupees as customs and also told the English that the Hugli *faujdār* had no right to negotiate on the matter.<sup>3</sup> The English at first decided not to give in but was ultimately obliged to pay the amount and thus get their factor and goods released.<sup>4</sup> As if in retaliation for this act of the prince they sent shortly afterwards "thirty soldiers and twenty black gunmen" to the Khidirpur customs post near Calcutta on the alleged ground of "abuse" and "affront" on its part, and had the post ransacked and at least six of its officials carried away and severely beaten and punished.<sup>5</sup> This highhanded act on the part of the English seems to have been passed over silently perhaps because of Prince Farrukh Siyar's departure from Bengal almost immediately after the incident.

Prince Farrukh Siyar's successor Sarbuland Khān arrived in Bengal in May 1709. The English placated him with a present of goods worth 2,000 rupees and obtained from him in September a general *parwāna* (order) for trade.<sup>6</sup> It was rendered ineffective, however, partly because of Sarbuland Khān's transfer from the province in the following month, and partly because it did not

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 November, 1708.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 December, 1708.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 December, 1708.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 & 26 April, 1709.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 August, 3 & 29 Sept., 1709.

have the necessary sanction of the *dīwān* who refused to acknowledge it and declined, in December 1709, to pass the English goods without the payment of the usual customs.<sup>1</sup> Once again the English had recourse to a show of force. They informed the Hugli *faujdār* that if "the boats of goods" were not cleared, they would not let any of "the Moor's ships pass." They also decided to despatch "forty soldiers and thirty black-gunners...to clear the boats."<sup>2</sup> Either because of this show of force or because he was in trouble with the *naqdī* soldiers, *dīwān* Diyā' Allah Khān sent orders in January 1710 for clearing the boats.<sup>3</sup> A few days afterwards he was killed by the *naqdī* soldiers at Murshidabad.<sup>4</sup>

VII: MURSHID QULI KHĀN'S RETURN: EMPEROR FARRUK SIYAR'S  
FARMĀN TO THE ENGLISH, 1717

On Diyā' Allah Khān's death Murshid Qulī Khān was recalled to Bengal as the *dīwān*. At the same time a new officer, Diyā' al-Dīn Khān, was appointed *faujdār* of Hugli with powers to regulate the affairs of the sea-ports on the eastern coast. Murshid Qulī Khān reached Bengal towards the end of 1710, and shortly afterwards Khān Jahān Bahādur arrived as the new deputy *ṣubahdār*. The new *faujdār* of Hugli had developed friendship with the English while serving in the Deccan. The latter now opened negotiations with him as well as with Murshid Qulī Khān for obtaining the absentee *ṣubahdār* Prince 'Azīm al-Shān's permission and also a *farmān* from the emperor. Early in July 1711 the English were about to accede to the *dīwān*'s demand for 60,000 rupees for the desired documents,<sup>5</sup> but a few days afterwards they were informed by Diyā' al-Dīn Khān that the Prince's permission had already been obtained and that it was expected at any time. Assured of this success through the Hugli *faujdār*, the English broke off their negotiations with Murshid Qulī Khān and even held out threats of stopping "all Moor ships from passing by our fort" if he stopped the English boats. They also recalled their representative from Kasimbazar, having made

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 December, 1709.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 January, 1710.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 January, 1710.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 July, 1711. See also Karim, *op.cit.*, pp.145-146.

arrangements to procure their whole investment for the next shipping through Fatchchand (later Jagat Śeth), an eminent merchant at Murshidabad.<sup>1</sup> It was against the background of these developments that Murshid Qulī Khān asked for and obtained the order of Diyā' al-Dīn Khān's transfer from Hugli which, as noted earlier,<sup>2</sup> was followed by a rather prolonged conflict between the two. The English now began to placate the deputy *ṣūbahdār* Khān Jahān Bahādur and obtained from him a *parwāna* (order) early in 1712 by giving him and his officers presents of goods worth about 500 rupees only.<sup>3</sup>

The want of unity among the officers in Bengal was only a reflection of the general decline of the Mughal empire and the political instability at the capital where things were once again in the melting pot on account of the death of the emperor early in 1712 and the outbreak of another war of succession which continued in its different phases throughout the year. During the same time Murshid Qulī Khān remained preoccupied with his conflicts with Diyā' al-Dīn Khān on the one hand, and Prince Farrukh Siyar on the other, while the English, armed with the deputy *ṣūbahdār's* *parwāna*, continued their trade as usual and also their efforts to procure an imperial *farmān*. In the beginning of 1713 Farrukh Siyar became the emperor. He recalled Khān Jahān Bahādur from Bengal, confirmed Murshid Qulī Khān as the *dīwān* and also made him the deputy *ṣūbahdār* of the province. Being thus secure in his position Murshid Qulī Khān turned his attention to the English and demanded from them the customs which had fallen in arrear for the past few years. The latter had, however, in the meantime sent through Diyā' al-Dīn Khān an application to the new emperor Farrukh Siyar and also letters to his four principal ministers seeking an order of safe passage of their embassy and presents to Delhi and permission in the meantime to trade freely in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa "as formerly", pending the obtaining of an imperial *farmān*.<sup>4</sup> These

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, *Consultations*, 3 July and 13 August, 1711.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 537-541.

<sup>3</sup> *Consultations*, 1 March, 1712.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 & 28 February, 16 & 27 March, 1713. A Persian copy of the application to Farrukh Siyar, which was in fact drawn up with the help of Diyā' al-Dīn Khān, together with its English translation, are attached with the *Consultation* of 27 March, 1713 (Range 1, Vol. 2, folio 300).

letters produced the desired effect. On 22 October 1717 an order from the imperial minister Taqarrab Khān was received. It directed all the *ṣūbahdārs* from Delhi to Bengal to ensure the safe passage of the English embassy; and on 4 January 1718 came another letter under the seal of the minister Sayyid ‘Abd Allah Khān asking Murshid Qulī Khān “to permit the English to trade as formerly in Aurangzeb’s time and not to molest them”.<sup>1</sup> On receipt of these orders Murshid Qulī Khān allowed the English to trade as usual without making further demands for customs.

Thus encouraged the English sent an embassy to the Mughal court headed by John Surman and accompanied, among others, by Khwājah Sarhad, a friendly Armenian merchant at Hugli. The embassy remained at Delhi for more than two years<sup>2</sup> and ultimately succeeded in obtaining emperor Farrukh Siyar’s *farmān* in 1717.<sup>3</sup> In the main it confirmed for the English the privilege of carrying on import and export trade in the three provinces in lieu of the annual payment of 3000 rupees only, directed the provincial authorities to help the English recover the goods stolen from them, or debts due to them by “any merchant, or weaver or others”, and to assist them in settling factories at any place. The *farmān* also confirmed the purchase of the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindpur by the English, and as regards their prayer for renting 38 other adjacent villages, permitted them to do so if these were “bought from the owners, & then permission given by the duan [*dīwān*] of the subah.” The *farmān* was strengthened by several ministerial orders or *ḥasb al-hukms* obtained by the English from the grand vizier Sayyid ‘Abd Allah Khān.<sup>4</sup> These orders, besides recounting the privileges mentioned in the *farmān*, asked the provincial *dīwān* to issue clearance certificates for the English goods on the basis of the lists supplied by the chief of a factory and also to allow the Company to have their bullion coined at Murshidabad mint, three days in a week, “if it be not against the king’s interest.”

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 October, 1713 and 4 January, 1714.

<sup>2</sup> See for details of the activities of the Surman embassy Wilson, Vol. II, Part II, Calcutta, 1911, which is exclusively devoted to this subject.

<sup>3</sup> *H.M.S.*, Vol. 69, pp. 130-131.

<sup>4</sup> *H.M.S.*, Vol. 630, Nos. 1, 12, 14, 28 and 29.



Thus despite Murshid Qulī Khān's ability and vigilance the English, taking advantage of the differences among the imperial officers in Bengal, in effect stole a march over them in general and over him in particular. During the early years of his tenure in Bengal Murshid Qulī Khān was preoccupied with urgent revenue matters and, arising out of these, with his conflict with Prince 'Azīm al-Dīn ('Azīm al-Shān) so that he could not naturally pay that much of attention to the foreign traders which the subject demanded. And although there was the imperial embargo on European trading in the Mughal dominions during the year 1702, the English, being in a rather strong position at Calcutta and the *dīwān* and the *sūbahdār* being at daggers drawn, practically set at naught the embargo in Bengal. After his return from the imperial court in 1704 and till Aurangzeb's death in 1707 Murshid Qulī Khān, though not formally recognizing the union between the two English companies, tacitly allowed them to trade as one company on payment of only the yearly *peshkash* of 3000 rupees. With the commencement of his second term of office (end of 1710) he was involved in a conflict with the Hugli *faujdār* Dīyā' al-Dīn Khān on the one hand and Prince Farrukh Siyar on the other. During the same period he had to deal with Sītārām's rebellion. And by the time (early 1713) he was free from these troubles to turn his attention towards the English, the latter had already got in touch with the imperial court from where they at first obtained permission to trade "as formerly" and then got Farrukh Siyar's *farmān* of 1717. The labyrinthian and protracted negotiations of the English with the provincial authorities from 1700 to 1713 have to be understood against this background. The frequent changes of rulers and provincial officers and the consequent need for reconfirmation of privileges, coupled with the absence of any concerted policy on the part of the provincial officers, doubtless put the foreign traders at a disadvantage; but while the other European nations generally adjusted themselves with the situation, the English fully utilised it to their advantage. Throughout their dealings with the local authorities they were guided by an awareness of the steady decline of the Mughal empire, a consciousness of their own strong position at Calcutta

and a determination to secure a solid commercial and territorial hold in Bengal. In this context Farrukh Siyar's *farmān* of 1717 marks an important stage in the English penetration in Bengal. For the remainder of his life Murshid Qulī Khān just managed to adhere strictly to the terms of the *farmān* and by taking advantage of the discretion given him by it refused to allow the English to rent the other villages near Calcutta or to have their bullion coined at Murshidabad without charge. Nor did he allow any further strengthening of their fortifications. After his death and with the further decline of the Mughal empire, however, the terms and provisions of the *farmān* were much exaggerated and abused, particularly in respect of the abuse of *dastakhs* and the carrying of extensive private trade by the English. But more than this, the secure footing which the *farmān* afforded the English in Bengal enabled them in the long run to establish their political authority in the land.

#### VIII: CHARACTER AND ESTIMATE

As Murshid Qulī Khān advanced in years and realized his end was nearing he had his tomb with a mosque and *katrah* (square with shops and resting places for travellers and merchants) built on the east side of the city.<sup>1</sup> He died in the middle of 1727 and was interned according to his wish in the grave constructed under the steps of the mosque.

As an administrator Murshid Qulī Khān was honest, efficient and just. He conformed strictly to the rules of the *sharī'at* in his private as well as public life. "Since the time of Shayisteh Khan", writes Salīm Allāh, "there had not appeared in Bengal, nor indeed in any part of Hindostan, an aumeer [*'amīr*] who could be compared with Jaffer Khan [Murshid Qulī Khān] for zeal in the propagation of the faith; for wisdom in the establishment of law and regulations; for munificence and liberality, in the encouragement and support given to men of family and eminence; for rigid

<sup>1</sup> T.B., pp.121-122. The author of the *Tawārikh-i-Bangālāh* states that the work of construction of the tomb and mosque was entrusted to one Murād who "pulled down all the neighbouring Hindoo temples" for the purpose so that not "one was left standing in Moorshedabad, or at the distance of four days journey from it." This statement is palpably untrue. The existence of several old Hindu temples not far from the tomb and the mosque, as K.P. Bandopadhyāya points out (*op.cit.*, pp.61-62) belies the above statement.

and impartial justice, in redressing wrongs, and punishing offenders: in short whose whole administration so much tended to the benefit of mankind and the glory of the creator."<sup>1</sup> His private life was exemplary. He never indulged in spirituous liquors or intoxicating drugs; "neither did he amuse himself with singers or dancers." Throughout his life he remained devoted to one wife, and "out of his excess of delicacy, would not suffer any strange women, or eunuchs, to enter" his private apartments.<sup>2</sup> He slept but little and carefully observed the stated times of prayer. He kept fast for three months of the year including the month of Ramadān. It was his daily routine to engage himself from break-fast to noon in copying the Qur'ān and in administering justice. "Every year he sent Korans of his own handwriting, with valuable offerings, to Mecca, Medina and other holy places."<sup>3</sup> In his dress and diet also Murshid Qulī Khān despised all kinds of luxury and abstained himself from everything that is prohibited in the *sharī'at*; "no high seasoned dishes were served upto his table; neither frozen sherbets or creams, but only plain ice."<sup>4</sup> He was, however, specially fond of mangoes and in the mango season he kept a *dārogħa* stationed at Rajmahal "to keep a regular account of the choicest mangoe trees in Maldah, Kutwalee and Husseinpoor" and to see that the fruit was regularly sent to Murshidabad.<sup>5</sup>

Himself a man of "extensive learning", Murshid Qulī Khān encouraged learning and "paid great respect to men who were eminent for their piety and erudition... His skill in arithmetic enabled him to scrutinize all accounts himself."<sup>6</sup> He maintained two readers [*Qārīs*] and men of piety who were constantly engaged in reading the Qur'ān and other acts of devotion.<sup>7</sup> He left the district of Birbhum out of his survey and settlement operations, as mentioned earlier, because its zamindar, Asad Allah, granted lands to the learned and the pious. Murshid Qulī Khān also established at least one great *madrasa* at Murshidabad,

<sup>1</sup> *T.B.*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

known as the *Katrah Madrasa*, because it also included a *katrah* or residence for travellers and merchants. "He made no retrenchments in any royal grants, or in those of former Soobahdars, for charitable purposes; but on the contrary, increased them."<sup>1</sup> Though himself a *Shī'a* he was tolerant of the others and "frequented the congregations of the sunnies."<sup>2</sup>

Murshid Qulī Khān administered strict and even-handed justice to all irrespective of rank and position, and his judicial decisions "were so rational and proper, that they were as much respected and obeyed as the decrees of those monarchs, whose names are most renowned for equity and justice."<sup>3</sup> If the officers of justice on any occasion showed partiality to any one and failed to do proper justice, the aggrieved party was sure to get justice from Murshid Qulī Khān on an appeal to him. It is related that early during his administration the *kotwāl* of Hugli forcibly took away a Mughal merchant's daughter and dishonoured her; but the *faujdār* of the place, Ahsan Allah, overlooked the offence because of his partiality to the *kotwāl*. The girl's father carried his complaint before Murshid Qulī Khān who "commanded that the offender should be stoned to death, conformably to the ordinance of the Koran; and notwithstanding all the entreaties of Ahsenullah [Ahsan Allah], who was a great favourite, the sentence was actually executed."<sup>4</sup> It is further related that prior to his coming to Bengal Murshid Qulī Khān had put his son to death for a capital offence on his part.<sup>5</sup>

Another distinguishing feature of his career as an officer was his steadfast loyalty to the Delhi throne. He rendered allegiance and regularly sent the provincial revenues to every prince who came out successful in the various wars of succession. In turn this earned for him the confirmation in his position by each succeeding emperor. Murshid Qulī Khān was "so punctual in the performance of all tokens of respect towards his sovereign", writes Salīm Allah, "that he would not sit down in a royal boat; and when, in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 25b.

the rainy season, the Emperor's nowarch [*nawwāra* ] came from Jehāngeernagur, for an exhibition, he went out to meet it; and turning his face towards the seat of government, made his obeisance, presented his nuzzir [*nazar* or presents], and kissed the deck of the state-boat."<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding his undoubted loyalty to the Delhi throne Murshid Qulī Khān seems to have realized that the central authority was on the wane. Hence he centralized the administration of the provinces under his charge in his own hands and took steps to establish his dynastic rule there. It was partly out of policy and partly due to his upbringing and temperament that he did not openly break away from the centre. His administrative knack and his having adopted the land for himself and his family might explain why he undertook his famous revenue survey and settlement measures rather late in his life when the weakness of the central government and his own advanced age must have become all too clear to him. The survey was fairly extensive and his revenue settlement was based on an equitable assessment keeping in view the productivity of the soil and the capability of the *ra'yat* to pay. From beginning to end the guiding principle of his revenue administration was the protection of the *ra'yat* against any excessive or unconscionable demand by the revenue collecting agencies. The same concern for the welfare of the people underlay his measures for ensuring a steady supply of foodgrains in the market and for maintaining the standard price. "He always provided against famine", writes Salīm Allāh, "and severely prohibited all monopolies of grain. He constantly made private enquiries concerning the market price of grain; and whenever he discovered any imposition, the offenders suffered the most exemplary punishments." Further, if the supply of grain to the cities and towns fell short of what had been usual, "he sent officers into the country, who broke open the hoards of individuals, and compelled them to carry their grain to the public markets... He also strictly prohibited the exportation of grains and the *faujdār* of Hooghly had express orders to see that no ship, belonging to the Europeans or others, was suffered to carry away more than was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

sufficient for the victualling of the crew, during their intended voyage. Neither were any merchants suffered to have any stores of grain."<sup>1</sup>

Murshid Qulī Khān adopted strong measures to maintain internal peace and to prevent the commission of crimes. If a robbery or theft was committed, he obliged the *faujdār* and the zamindars of the area to detect the criminal and to recover the stolen goods. The goods or their equivalent "were given to the person who had been robbed; and the thief was impaled alive."<sup>2</sup> For the same purpose he had *thānahs* or police posts established in areas where crimes were frequent. Salīm Allah mentions that three such *thānahs* were established at Katua, Murshidganj and Pubthel on the Burdwan road "for the protection of travellers", and the command of those *thānahs* was given to one Muḥammad Jān. "This man, whenever he seized a highway robber, used to have his body split in two, and hung upon trees on the high road: on this account he was commonly called Koolhrea [*Kurhulia*], or the axe."<sup>3</sup>

Murshid Qulī Khān's strict justice and punctual collection of the revenue have naturally given rise to some adverse legends about him. There is however no valid basis for the assumptions, derived from such legends and an imperfect examination of the sources, that he generally meted out barbarous punishments to the zamindars, or that he supplanted them by a new class of revenue farmers, or that he forcibly converted defaulting Hindu zamindars to Islam. Nor is it true that he unjustly extorted money from the foreign traders or stopped their business. On the contrary his time witnessed a vast expansion of the country's export trade and the consequential incoming of a great quantity of bullion which boosted the country's internal trade and economy in general.

Despite his abilities and good qualities, however, Murshid Qulī Khān could not raise himself above the level of a merely provincial governor for a central government. It goes to his credit that when the centre was being convulsed by repeated wars of succession and the Mughal empire was in visible decline, he

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.108.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

succeeded in maintaining peace and continuity of the administration in the provinces. But this was more or less a result of his success in maintaining his own position there; for the distant provinces like Bengal did not in general stir much in connection with the struggles for the throne at Delhi. And despite the peace that Bengal enjoyed under him, the process of decline had been equally operative there under the surface. Murshid Qulī Khān's own rise to the position which he held for so long a time and his administration in general rather reflected this inherent decline. His transfer of the revenue and administrative capital from Dacca to Murshidabad, though it enabled him to avoid the opposition and influence of the Muslim *jāgīrdārs* entrenched in eastern Bengal, led to the decline of Dacca and east Bengal generally on the one hand, and brought the government in turn closer to the influence of the newly rising mercantile community. Similarly disastrous was the transfer of the Muslim nobles' *jāgīrs* from eastern Bengal to Orissa. Both these measures served to break the backbone of the old Muslim nobility in Bengal. And before a new Muslim nobility from among his own adherents and supporters could take a deep root at the new capital, he helped the rise of a new Hindu official and semi-official aristocracy. His preference for Hindu officials and zamindars accelerated this process of elimination of Muslim elements from positions of trust and influence and betrayed a rather weak attempt on his part to prevent the rise of any rival group from among the old Muslims of the province. And partly because of this policy and partly on account of the increasing trade of the foreigners, there also arose during his time a new Hindu mercantile community headed by the Jagat Śeth family.<sup>1</sup> By 1721 Fatehchand Jagat Śeth became so favourite with

<sup>1</sup> The founder of the Jagat Śeth family, Hirananda Śetha, was originally from Nagaur in Marwar. Towards the end of Shāh Jahān's reign he established his banking business at Patna. He died in 1711; but before that his eldest son, Manikchand Shāhā, had opened his business at Dacca. He became a favourite of Murshid Qulī Khān and accompanied him to Murshidabad when the latter transferred the *diwān* there. In 1712 emperor Farrukh Siyar, in return for substantial financial assistance during his war for succession to the throne, conferred on Mānikchānd the title of "Nagar Śeth" or City Banker. Mānikchānd died two years afterwards and was succeeded in his flourishing banking business by his nephew (sister's son) Fatehchānd. In 1723, on Murshid Qulī Khān's recommendation emperor Muḥammad Shāh conferred on Fatehchānd the title of "Jagat Śeth" or World Banker. See for details J. H. Little, "The House of Jagat Śeth", *B.P.P.*, Vol. XX (1920), pp. 141-200, and Vol. XXI (1921), pp. 1-119.

Murshid Qulī Khān that he did not allow any other *ṣarrāf* (banker or money-changer) to have the bullion brought by the foreign traders coined at the government mint. This enabled Jagat Śeth not only to monopolize the bullion market, but also to control the currency system. Before long the Hindu official and commercial class emerged as a powerful factor in the body politic. Further, it was also during Murshid Qulī Khān's time that the English traders firmly established themselves in Bengal, firstly by fortifying their settlements at Calcutta during the wars of succession and, secondly, by obtaining emperor Farrukh Siyar's *fārmān* in 1717. Thus the forces and factors which ultimately supplanted the Muslim political power in Bengal clearly emerged during Murshid Qulī Khān's time. In effect his rule constituted only a deceptive facade of peace and stability behind which the process of degeneration and decline continued apace.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### SHUJĀ' AL-DĪN MUHAMMAD KHĀN AND SARFARĀZ KHĀN

#### I: A WAR OF SUCCESSION DEFERRED

The anomalous situation which Murshid Qulī Khān had created for himself by continuing his allegiance to the decadent central authority and at the same time trying to establish his dynastic rule in the provinces of Bengal and Orissa became obvious on the eve of his death. He had no male issue, but had a grandson, Sarfarāz Khān, for whom he had already obtained the *diwānī* of Bengal. Murshid Qulī Khān now nominated him as his successor, delivered over to him "all his treasures and effects",<sup>1</sup> and wrote "to his agents at court and spared no pains and no expense" to obtain the Mughal emperor's formal appointment of Sarfarāz Khān to the government of the two provinces.<sup>2</sup> It did not perhaps occur to the dying Nawwāb that if the emperor's appointment did really matter, any one else would be within his right to seek and obtain it. If, on the other hand, it was just a matter of form, which under the circumstances it had virtually become so, the right of succession remained open to be decided by one's personal strength and local support. The tragedy was that it was Sarfarāz Khān's father, Murshid Qulī Khān's son-in-law and deputy *ṣūbahdār* in Orissa, who was opposed to the dying Nawwāb's plan and who himself wanted to succeed to the government of the provinces.

Whether Murshid Qulī was aware of his son-in-law's intentions is not known. For sometime past, however, the relationship between the two had ceased to be cordial partly on account of their "diversity of tempers and opinions" and partly because Shujā' al-Dīn Khān had grown more attached to another wife, for which reason Murshid Qulī Khān's daughter, Zīant al-Nisā', had been living at Murshidabad with her father and son. Murshid Qulī Khān's choice of Sarfarāz Khān as his successor thus

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I., 276.

appears to be born out of both dynastic and personal considerations. Sarfarāz Khān was however no match for his father Shujā' al-Dīn Khān who possessed undoubted military and administrative skill. He was descended from the Afshar tribe of the Turks dwelling in Khurasan in eastern Iran where one of his ancestors was governor of the province during Shāh Tahmasp's reign. Shujā' al-Dīn's father held an important post at Burhanpur in the Deccan under Aurangzeb. It was at Burhanpur that Shujā' al-Dīn came in close contact with Murshid Qulī Khān, married his daughter, and subsequently came to Bengal when Murshid Qulī Khān had him appointed as deputy *sūbahdār* of Orissa. Shujā' al-Dīn proved himself both efficient and successful as governor of that province and built up a considerable army of his own there. He was moreover now supported by a number of influential persons, not the least of whom was Murshid Qulī Khān's own agent at the Delhi court, Balkisan (or Balkrishna).<sup>1</sup> This man, instead of supporting his principal's nominee (Sarfarāz Khān), sided with Shujā' al-Dīn Khān and tried to get for him the emperor's appointment. As subsequent events show, Murshid Qulī Khān's special favourite, the Jagat Śeth Fatehchānd, also favoured Shujā' al-Dīn's succession. He was further fortunate in having in his service two able brothers, Hājī Ahmad and Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī (later 'Alivardī Khān). They were the sons of Mirzā Muḥammad, "husband to a lady, who being herself of the Afshar tribe" was allied to Shujā' al-Dīn Khān. Mirzā Muḥammad had originally been in the service of Aurangzeb's son A'zam Shāh, on whose death he was "reduced to the utmost poverty and distress." Ultimately he managed to come to Orissa where Shujā' al-Dīn, "glad to oblige a relation", took him into his service and showed him so much kindness that his sons also were encouraged to migrate from Delhi, with their "consorts, children and relations of the whole family", travelling first to Bengal and then joining their father in Orissa.<sup>2</sup> Shujā' al-Dīn employed them in

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I., 275-276. The story of the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* (pp. 134-135) that the two brothers, Hājī Ahmad and Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī, came to Orissa after their father's death and after having cloped with some jewels from the imperial treasury, and that they infatuated themselves into Shujā' =

his service, and as the two brothers were both men of abilities and "of much versatility of mind", they greatly strengthened their patron's government, particularly in the management of the finances and the revenues of the province. Of the two brothers the younger, Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī, was more brilliant as a soldier, "displayed a greater extent of genius, than either his father or brother", and thus came "soon to eclipse all his relations, as well as all the persons" in Shujā' al-Dīn's government.<sup>1</sup>

It was mainly to these men that Shujā' al-Dīn now turned for advice and support when he came to know about his father-in-law's nomination of Sarfarāz Khān as his successor. Ḥājī Aḥmad and Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī readily agreed to support him by all means. They first of all selected some trustworthy acquaintances of theirs who were "men of talents, and of ready speech", and sent them to the Delhi court with suitably written supplications to the emperor, the vizier, and the "Prince of Prince" Khān Daurān, requesting the patents of *dīwān* and *nāzim* for both the provinces of Bengal and Orissa to be granted to Shujā' al-Dīn Khān. Secondly, under their suggestion the latter pretended to dismiss a number of military personnel and despatched them by various routes to Murshidabad, "with orders to keep themselves disjointed", but in the environs of Murshid Qulī Khān's palace, "so as to be night and day ready to execute such orders as would be sent after them."<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, to keep the lines of communication open with Murshidabad, and in view of the approaching rainy season, Shujā' al-Dīn kept a "vast number of boats of all sizes and for all uses", with a multitude of boatmen, so that "on the very first intelligence of Murshid Qulī Khān's death he might proceed

= Khān's confidence and friendship by "vilely prostituting their own women" to his desires is totally unworthy of credence. If Ḥājī Aḥmad and his brother had possessed themselves of valuable jewels they would not have taken the trouble of taking the rather hazardous journey, as the *Tawārīkh* itself states, through the Deccan to Orissa. Moreover, in that case they would not have continued to retain their credit with the Delhi court, as subsequent events clearly show. Secondly, the *Siyar*'s statement that they came to Shujā' Khān because he and their mother belonged to the same Afshar tribe of Khurasan, seems more reasonable. Thirdly, the military and administrative abilities subsequently exhibited by the two brothers, especially by 'Alivardi Khān, corroborates the *Siyar*'s story that Shujā' al-Dīn was impressed by their skill.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

to Murshidabad without any hindrance". At the same time he established a number of secret posts for being every day furnished with intelligence from both Delhi and Murshidabad.

At last news came from reliable sources that Murshid Qulī Khān had "hardly five or six days to live". Therefore leaving his son Muḥammad Taqī Khān, born of his other wife, as his deputy in Orissa, Shujā' al-Dīn set out for Murshidabad with his troops and men, including Ḥājī Aḥmad and Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī. On his way Shujā' al-Dīn received the confirmed news of Murshid Qulī Khān's death and while near Midnapur he also received the emperor's orders appointing him to the government of the provinces.<sup>1</sup> Considering the spot as fortunate he stopped there for sometime, named it *Mubārak Manzil* (the fortunate stage), and gave orders for erecting a *kātrah* and a *sarāi* (rest house) there.<sup>2</sup> From Midnapur he marched straight upon Murshidabad where "without giving himself time to take breath" he went directly to the *Chehel Sutun* or the Forty Pillared Public Hall, and gathering there the *Wāqī'a Nawīs* (Imperial Information Officer), the *Sawānah Nawīs* (Crown Intelligencer) and other principal men of the city, he produced "his patents, got them read aloud by those two officers, and having procured himself to be acknowledged as the lawful *ṣūbahdār* of the two provinces", took possession of the *masnad* (viceregal seat) and formally sat on it.<sup>3</sup> He was then acknowledged and congratulated by everyone present.

The whole operation was accomplished with consummate skill and expedition so that Sarfarāz Khān appears to have been overtaken by an accomplished fact. According to the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* Sarfarāz Khān, having received intelligence of his father's approach, made preparations for marching against him, but that, his (Sarfarāz Khān's) mother and grandmother desisted him from so doing by arguing that his father being an old man

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 278; *T. B.*, 125. According to the latter, the nominal *ṣūbahdārī* was conferred on the influential court noble Khān Daurān who in his turn sent a *sanad* appointing Shujā' al-Dīn his deputy in Bengal and Orissa. The *Siyar* states that Shujā' Khān "received the patent for which he had applied to court". From subsequent events it would seem that Shujā' al-Dīn was directly appointed *ṣūbahdār* of the provinces.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar*, I., 278.

"could not long keep him out of the government and the inheritance of Jaffer Khan's estate" and that therefore he should not be "guilty of the horrid impiety of appearing in arms against his father, which would scandalize him with all the world."<sup>1</sup> The *Siyar*, on the other hand, states that Sarfarāz Khān was not vigilant enough, being then "actually at a country-seat about two miles from the city, in the full confidence that he was the designed and undoubted heir of Djaafer-qhan, his grandfather, in his offices and estate, and that there was no man daring enough to dispute his title."<sup>2</sup> When therefore he came to know about the real state of affairs he consulted his principal courtiers and army officers about the course of action to be taken. Most of them answered "unanimously that as his father had received and proclaimed his patents; had taken possession of the Mesned of command as well as the palace of the city; had been peaceably acknowledged; and was master of the treasury; there remained no other party, but that of submission."<sup>3</sup> Both these accounts, however, point to the same sequence, namely, that Sarfarāz Khān, being faced with an accomplished fact and finding opposition to his father impracticable, peacefully submitted to him. Thus a conflict between father and son was averted; but, as will be seen later on, the war of succession was in fact only deferred, for after his father's death Sarfarāz Khān had to fight and die for the *masnad*, though by that time he was the nominee of his father.

## II: SHUJĀ' AL-DĪN KHĀN'S EARLY MEASURES

Shujā' al-Dīn's success was due not simply to his having the emperor's *sanad*, or to his having mustered sufficient armed forces to overcome any possible opposition to him. His real success lay in winning over to his side the important men in the two provinces, including Fatehchānd Jagat Śeth and Murshid Qulī Khān's own agent at the Delhi court. Indeed, the way in which Shujā' al-Dīn got possession of the *masnad* and some of his early measures would indicate that there was already growing an

<sup>1</sup> *T.B.*, 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I., 278.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

opposition to Murshid Qulī Khān's policies, especially perhaps to his strong measures against defaulting zamindars, whose relatives and friends must have been seeking a reversal of those policies by nullifying the succession of his nominee to the *masnad*. Even Sarfarāz Khān's mother and grandmother, and his own army officers appear to have been not too unfavourably disposed towards Shujā' al-Dīn. And on coming to power he took steps to further placate the ladies, specially his wife Zīnat al-Nisā', whom he gave to understand on suitable occasions that she, being the daughter of Murshid Qulī Khān, was the real and sole heiress to her father's government and estate and that he, Shujā' al-Dīn, was only acting on her behalf.

Two of his early measures were definitely a departure from his predecessor's policies. Thus shortly after his accession Shujā' al-Dīn formed "a kind of council" for the general affairs of government, consisting of Hajī Ahmad, Muhammad 'Alī, already decorated with the title 'Alivardī Khān, the Jāgat Śeth and the Rāi Raiyān 'Ālam Chānd.<sup>1</sup> The last named person was originally Shujā' al-Dīn Khān's *muharrir* or household accounts clerk in Orissa, but was now made *dīwān* of the *nizāmat* of Bengal and was rewarded with a *mansab* of one thousand *dhāt* and the title of *Rāi Raiyān*, "an honour that had never before been conferred upon any officer of the nizamat or of the dewanny of Bengal."<sup>2</sup> This council was invested with the "power of binding and losing", as the *Siyar* puts it, "and acted as his Chief Ministers."<sup>3</sup> Secondly, Shujā' al-Dīn reviewed the cases of the zamindars who had been kept in prison and confinement. He unconditionally released those whom he found to be innocent or free from any crime or fraud. With regard to the others he freed them on their having made solemn promises and given written undertakings to pay an increase upon Murshid Qulī Khān's settlement and also to be punctual in the payment of their revenues.<sup>4</sup> They were only happy to do so, for some of them had been for years in prison.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>2</sup> *T.B.*, 133-134. The title of *Rāi Raiyān* was given to Hindus only. It meant Counsellor of Counsellors, or the Chief Counsellor.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar*, I., 281.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 279-280; *T.B.*, 128-129.

They not only expressed their gratitude for Shujā' al-Dīn's "generosity and goodness" but also promised to be "obedient and dutiful in whatever services his goodness might think fit to command" them.<sup>1</sup>

Shujā' al-Dīn next redistributed the key posts in the administration among his own men and adherents. He continued his eldest son Sarfarāz Khān as the *dīwān* of Bengal, and his (Shujā' al-Dīn's) second son Muḥammad Taqī Khān as the deputy *ṣubahdār* of Orissa. The deputy *ṣubahdār* of Jahāngīrnagar (Dacca) was bestowed on Shujā' al-Dīn's son-in-law, Murshid Qulī Khān II. Other positions of trust and responsibility were given to the three sons of Hājī Aḥmad, already married with the three daughters of 'Alivardī Khān who had no son. The eldest, Muḥammad Riḍā (subsequently entitled Nawāzish Muḥammad), was made the Paymaster of the forces;<sup>2</sup> the second, Aqā Muḥammad (later Mirzā Sa'īd Aḥmad), was appointed *faujdār* of the Rangpur-Ghorāghāt region; while the youngest, Muḥammad Hāshem 'Alī (later entitled Mirzā Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad) was entrusted with the *faujdārī* of Akbarnagar alias Rajmahal.<sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously with this reallocation of posts Shujā' al-Dīn took steps to conciliate the emperor by sending him the value of the late *ṣubahdār's* estate amounting to some "forty lacks of

<sup>1</sup> Siyar, I., 280. Jadunath Sarkar's statement (*H.B.I.*, 424) that Shujā' al-Dīn "realized from them [the imprisoned zamindars] worth one Kror and fifty lakhs of rupees, and sent the amount to the Emperor's treasury at Delhi through the Banking Agency of Fatchchand" seems to be a misreading of the text of the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* which simply mentions that Shujā' al-Dīn accepted *naṣrāna* from the zamindars and then goes on to say: "Besides the profits arising from the jageers, with the extra collections under the descriptions of Emarat, Karkanehjaut, and nuzziraneh, there was annually paid into the royal treasury, through the house of Juggut Seat, a cror and fifty lacks of rupees". (*T.B.*, 129). The amount is thus stated to be the total of collections under the various heads in each year, and not simply of the *naṣrāna* received from the zamindars on the eve of their release.

<sup>2</sup> Siyar, I., 281. According to *T.B.* (135), he was made Dārogha of the Custom House at Murshidabad.

<sup>3</sup> Siyar, I., 281. The *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* says that Hājī's brother Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī was made the *faujdār* of Rajmahal with the title of 'Alivardī Khān. But the *Siyar's* statement that he stayed at Murshidabad as a member of the council till his appointment as the deputy *ṣubahdār* of Bihar seems to be correct for two reasons. First, the *Tawārīkh's* statement that Hājī Aḥmad's youngest son "Mirza Mohammed Hashem, was honoured with the title of Hashem Ali Khan" (pp. 135-136) is clearly a confusion on the historian's part; for Hashem 'Alī was the original name of the man, and the addition of *Khān* only, if that is what the author means, was too insubstantial a reward. Secondly, when 'Alivardī Khān was appointed deputy *ṣubahdār* of Orissa he took along with him Hashem 'Alī Khān, and the post of the *faujdār* of Rajmahal thus having fallen vacant, was then given to Hājī Aḥmad's son-in-law, 'Atā' Alī Khān.

rupees", besides "a great number of elephants, and other valuable presents". It is stated that the new *sūbahdār* obliged the zamindars to purchase "at twice their value" the "old camp-equipage, and unserviceable cattle, that belonged to the late soobahdar". And at the end of the year Shujā' al-Dīn remitted to Delhi "the amount of the revenues, and the accustomed peishkush of elephants, Tanghian horses, fine cloths and other manufactures."<sup>1</sup> The emperor, being pleased with these remittances and display of loyalty, conferred on Shujā' al-Dīn Khān the titles of *Mu'taman al-Mulk Shujā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Khān Bahādur Asad Jang* (the Faithful Servant of the Empire, Champion of Religion, Muhammad Khān the Brave and Lion-like in war), and also a *mansab* of "seven thousand zat, and the like number of cavalry", with a *khil'at*, a fringed *pālki* (palanquin) and standard.<sup>2</sup>

In consonance with the same policy of consolidating his position by winning as much public support as possible Shujā' al-Dīn brought to justice Murād and Nazīr Aḥmad, two unpopular officers of the previous regime. They were tried for oppressive and haighhanded dealings and were condemned to death "for their infamous extortions", and their properties were confiscated. "In a word," writes Salīm Allah. "by his general conduct in the commencement of his government, he showed himself deserving of his good fortunes."<sup>3</sup> Last but not least, knowing full well that his security and strength lay primarily in having a well-equipped army at his disposal, Shujā' al-Dīn increased it to twentyfive thousand, consisting of cavalry, matchlockmen (*barkandāz*) and infantry. He also secured their cooperation and attachment by fixing for them liberal pay and allowances.<sup>4</sup>

### III: AFFAIRS AT JAHĀNGĪRNAGAR: CONQUEST OF TIPPERA

Shujā' al-Dīn was well served by his officers and friends. Especially, the administration of eastern Bengal under his

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 129-130.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131. As pointed out by Gladwin on the basis of the *Ām-i-Akbarī* (tr. Vol. I., p. 245), the *mansab* of seven thousand *dhāt* carried an allowance of 45,000 rupees per mensem.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.



son-in-law Murshid Qulī Khān II proved singularly successful. For once at least after the transfer of the capital from that place, the affairs of Jahāgīrnagar attracted public attention during Shujā' al-Dīn's rule. There Murshid Qulī Khān II was ably assisted by Mīr Ḥabīb, a man of genius from Shirāz, Persia, who was for sometime a "peddling broker" at Hugli. He had no formal education and could not therefore read and write, but "he talked the Persian language fluently" and soon formed an intimacy with Murshid Qulī Khān II at Murshidabad. The latter took him to Jahāgīrnagar and appointed him as his assistant there. To his experience as a successful merchant Mīr Ḥabīb joined the rare qualities of a soldier and administrator, and was "very industrious in office."<sup>1</sup> He reduced the expenses of the administration by making considerable retrenchments in the *nawwāra* and other expensive establishments, and also "acquired great sums for his master by conducting monopolies."<sup>2</sup> The introduction of monopolies was definitely suggested by his commercial experiences, but neither the articles over which monopolies were created, nor the overall effect of this measure upon the people in general are known. Similar obscurity prevails over another incident with which he is said to have been associated. It is stated that he "treacherously put to death" and confiscated the property of Nūr Allah, zamindar of Jalalpur (in Brahmanbaria subdivision of Tippera district).<sup>3</sup>

Mīr Ḥabīb's most notable achievement was, however, the conquest of Tippera (Hill Tippera or Tripura). The occasion for the undertaking was provided by domestic quarrels within that state. Having been expelled by his uncle, the son of the late Rājā of Tippera fled to Dacca and sought the assistance of the authorities there for recovering his ancestral possession. With the consent of the deputy *shūbahdār* Mīr Ḥabīb gave the Tippera prince "hopes of obtaining the zamindarry" for him. Accordingly Mīr Ḥabīb led an expedition into Tippera, accompanied by Aqā Ṣādiq, zamindar of Pat Pesar. The Tippera prince "conducted the troops through the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

passes and over the fords of the rivers" so that the army suddenly appeared near the capital. His uncle, taken unawares and in no position to offer resistance, fled the country and took shelter in the mountains, leaving Mīr Ḥabīb in quiet possession of the whole country. The latter took the principal forts of Chāndigarh and Jayantah and captured a considerable amount of booty. He conferred the zamindari of the land, as promised, on the Tippera prince, but otherwise annexed it to the *ṣūbah*, placed strong garrisons in its different parts and appointed Aqā Ṣādiq as the *faujdar* of the territory. After making these arrangements for the new conquest Mīr Ḥabīb returned to Jahāngīrnagar with the booty and "a great number of elephants". Murshid Qulī Khān II sent the major portion of the booty to Shujā' al-Dīn with an account of the new conquest. The latter renamed Tippera as *Raushan Ābād* (the land of light), and conferred on Murshid Qulī Khān II the additional title of *Bahādur* (Valiant) and on Mīr Ḥabīb that of *Khān* (Lord).<sup>1</sup>

Murshid Qulī Khān II remained at Jahāngīrnagar for about seven years, till 1734, when on the death of Muḥammad Taqī Khān in that year he was transferred to Orissa as its deputy *ṣūbahdar*. Mīr Ḥabīb followed him there. The deputy *ṣūbahdarī* of Dacca was now formally conferred upon Sarfarāz Khān. The latter did not however leave the capital (Murshidabad) and, instead, sent to Dacca his deputy, Ghālib 'Alī Khān, a Sayyid "of the imperial family of Persia" who was to be assisted in revenue affairs by an experienced officer of Murshid Qulī Khān's time, named Jasawant Rāi. Sarfarāz Khān also appointed his son-in-law (and son of his uterine sister Nafīsa Begam) Murād 'Alī Khān as *dārogha* of the *nawwāra* at Dacca.

Ghālib 'Alī Khān's administration at Dacca is singularly notable in that it attained under him once again the same degree of peace and prosperity which it had witnessed during Shāista Khān's period. Jasawant Rāi proved to be an efficient revenue administrator. He had the monopolies created during the previous administration and the various impositions on grains abolished.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

This gave an impetus to trade and agriculture and the price of foodgrains came down to a *dāmri* a *seer* or eight *maunds* (about 320 Kg.) a rupee, as it was during Shāista Khān's time. That viceroy, it may be recalled, had sealed the western gate of the city of Dacca on the eve of his departure for Delhi with the injunction that no one should presume to open it till the price of grain was brought down to that level. This gate was now once again opened. "The rich province of Jehangeernagur", writes Salīm Allah, "by the prudent administration of a system of sound policy and humanity, was cultivated in every part, and resembled a garden in the season of spring."<sup>1</sup>

This state of affairs continued as long as Ghālib Khān and Jasawant Rāi remained at Dacca. Sometime afterwards, however, Sarfarāz Khān's son-in-law Murād 'Alī Khān was appointed to succeed Ghālib 'Alī Khān. Murād 'Alī Khān had as his adviser Rāj Ballabh, the *peshkā*r (clerk) of the *nawwāra*, and the two began to act in such a way that Jasawant Rāi resigned his post out of disgust. Consequently the revenue administration of the province became once again encumbered with various irregularities so that towards the end of Shujā' al-Dīn's rule the area did not have the same extent of affluence and economic prosperity.

#### IV: ORISSA AND OTHER AFFAIRS

Murshid Qulī Khān II and his assistant Mīr Ḥabīb continued the same tradition of a vigorous administration in Orissa as well. There too the latter is stated to have made "great reductions in the expenses" and other arrangements so that there was a considerable increase in the revenues.<sup>2</sup> One notable achievement of Murshid Qulī Khān II there was the recovery of the guardianship of the Hindu idol of Jagannāth at Pūrī and the re-establishment of the government's control over the Hindu pilgrimage to that place. During his predecessor Muḥammad Taqī Khān's time the zamindar of Pūrī had carried away the idol across the Chilkā lake, "beyond the boundary of Orissa". This action deprived the government of an important source of revenue, causing a loss of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-144.

about nine lakhs of rupees, "being the amount of the annual collections from the pilgrims". Murshid Qūlī Khān II sent Ḥabīb Allāh Khān against the neighbouring Hindu territory where the Pūrī zamindar had taken the idol. Its ruler, Doond Deo (Rāmchandra Deva II ?) was obliged to make peace by paying "a considerable" *naẓrāna* and to return the idol. Thus the government's control over the pilgrimage at Pūrī was re-established and a source of loss stopped.<sup>1</sup>

During the later part of Shujā' al-Dīn's rule the subordinate Rājā of Kuch Bihar and the zamindar of Dinajpur, "confiding in their riches and strength", withheld payment of their tributes and revenues and "wanted to make themselves independent." At this Shujā' al-Dīn sent an expedition against them under the command of Mirzā Muḥammad Sa'īd (Ḥājī Aḥmad's second son), the *faujdār* of Rangpur. The latter carried out the expedition with complete success, "got possession of the whole countries, together with the immense treasures which the rajahs and their ancestors had amassed". Kuch Bihar was annexed to the *ṣūbah*; and on account of this conquest Shujā' al-Dīn conferred upon Mirzā Sa'īd the titles of *Khān* and *Bahādur*.<sup>2</sup> About the same time the Afghan zamindar of Birbhum, Badī' al-Zamān, withheld payment of the revenue of some 1400,000 *bighās* (700,000 acres) of cultivated land under him and assumed independence. Thereupon Sarfarāz Khān, "who had the charge of that district", sent an expedition against him under the command of Mīr Sharaf al-Dīn and Khwāja Basant. Badī' al-Zamān found it impossible to oppose their forces and thought it prudent to submit. The two generals brought him with them to Murshidabad where Shujā' al-Dīn pardoned him and allowed him to return to Birbhum on his having undertaken to pay a tribute of three lakhs of rupees annually and upon the zamindar of Burdwan Kīrāt Sing's having stood "security for the performance of his engagements."<sup>3</sup>

#### V: ADDITION OF BIHAR: 'ALĪVARDĪ KHĀN'S RISE

In 1733 the *ṣūbahdār* of Bihar, Fakhr al-Daulah, fell out with

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

the influential court noble Khān-i-Daurān and was in consequence dismissed from the post. At Khān-i-Daurān's instance Bihar was now added to the charge of Shujā' al-Dīn Khān. He intended to appoint his son Sarfarāz Khān as the deputy *sūbahdār* of the newly added province; but the latter's mother, Zīnat al-Nisā' did not agree to part with her son and send him away from the capital. The choice therefore fell upon 'Alivardī Khān. According to the *Siyar*, 'Alivardī Khān was formally invested with the office by Zīnat al-Nisā' herself who sent for him to the gate of her apartment and having ordered a rich *khiḷ'at* to be placed on his shoulders, "she conferred upon him the Government of Bahar, as from herself." And it was only after this investiture that Shujā' al-Dīn, on his part, presented 'Alivardī Khān with the *khiḷ'at* and patent of the deputyship, together with "an elephant, a sabre, and a quantity of jewels".<sup>1</sup> Shujā' al-Dīn Khān also wrote to the emperor and to Khān-i-Daurān to confer upon 'Alivardī Khān the title of *Mahābat Jang* (Dreadful in war), a fringed *pālkī*, a standard and a kettle-drum, and also an increase in his *manṣab* to "five thousand horse".<sup>2</sup> A few days before this elevation in his position 'Alivardī Khān had a grandson born to him by his youngest daughter Amīna Begam, married to his youngest nephew Hāshem 'Alī Khān (Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān). As 'Alivardī had no son, he adopted this child, named him after his own name as Mirzā Muhammad 'Alī (subsequently decorated with the titles of *Badshāh Qulī Khān* and *Sirāj al-Daulah*), and took him and his father, together with 'Alivardī's eldest nephew and son-in-law Muhammad Ridā (Nawāzish Muhammad Khān) to Bihar. Shujā' al-Dīn sent five thousand cavalry and infantry with 'Alivardī Khān.<sup>3</sup>

Bihar offered to 'Alivardī Khān a challenging field for displaying his military and administrative abilities as well as for building up his personal power which enabled him subsequently

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I, 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, The *T.B.* (p.140) states that while in Bihar 'Alivardī Khān obtained the title of *Mahābat Jang* through his friend Isahāq Khān and other ministers at Delhi and "without consulting his patron and benefactor Shujā' Khān" does not appear to be correct. The titles and honours did of course arrive after he had reached and settled there.

<sup>3</sup> *T.B.*, 138.

to capture the *masnad* of Bengal. During the previous deputy governor Fakhr al-Daulah's time the administration of Bihar had fallen into total disarray. Taking advantage of his weakness and that of the central government a number of zamindars of different localities like Betia, Bhojpur, Phulwara and Chakwar had ceased to pay tributes or revenues to the government and had assumed independence for all practical purposes. The zamindars of the last named place near Monghyr and the Banjara tribe of the same locality had become particularly troublesome. Under pretence of carrying on trade they "laid the whole country under contribution, and plundered the royal revenues."<sup>1</sup> The most formidable of the zamindars were Sundar Sing of Tikari and Nāmdār (or Kāmgar) Khān Main of Narhat Samai.

'Alivardī Khān was determined to pacify the land and to bring the rebellious zamindars and tribes under authority. He realized, however, that the small army of five thousand cavalry and infantry sent with him from Bengal was totally inadequate for the purpose. Hence he at first addressed himself to the task of organizing a strong and well-equipped army. It appears that about that time a large number of Afghans, presumably under pressure of Persia under Nādir Shāh, had migrated towards eastern India in search of security and adventure. 'Alivardī Khān found in these Afghans, who were very numerous in Bihar at that time, the much needed recruits for his army.<sup>2</sup> Among others he took into his service one 'Abd al-Karīm, "an Afghan Rohilla, who commanded fifteen hundred of his countrymen."<sup>3</sup> Thus having built up a considerable army 'Alivardī Khān chastised one by one the rebellious zamindars and tribes and established his authority over all parts of the province. "They all agreed to pay nuzzeraneh and peishkush [*nazrāna* and *peshkash*, respectful presents and tributes]; and the revenues were permanently settled. These conquests brought immense sums to Alyvirdy Khan; and Abdulkurreem and his troops were also made rich by the plunder."<sup>4</sup> Thus having brought the whole province under

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar*, I., 283.

<sup>4</sup> *T. B.*, 139.

effective control within the course of only one year 'Alivardī Khān returned to Murshidabad to pay his respects to his benefactor and master, Shujā' al-Dīn Khān, who received him with every mark of distinction and favour and sent him back to his government. Soon he also received the titles and honours for which Shujā' al-Dīn Khān had written to the court.

'Alivardī Khān was not, however, dazzled by his titles and formal dignities. Being a man of "wisdom and industry, endowed with a lofty enterprising mind", he continued "augmenting and inuring his forces, gaining the hearts of the subjects, and attaching the military to his person.... Above all, he made it a standing rule to bring into his service as many military of character as he came to hear of in the neighbouring provinces; and by these means he in a little time found himself at the head of an army, well-equipped, and furnished with everything that could ensure success."<sup>1</sup> Some of his Afghan recruits, however, proved troublesome; but he was alert and unsparing in chastising them and making them serve for an example to other would-be-disloyal elements. Such was particularly the case with 'Abd al-Karīm Khān. This Afghan, "proud of his prowess, minding no superior, and fearing no one, set his master at defiance, and continued to be guilty of actions that strongly savoured of an assuming refractory temper, and a spirit of independence that spurned at control."<sup>2</sup> 'Alivardī Khān thought that to connive further at his excesses and insolencies would be highly imprudent and dangerous; but as an open confrontation with him was thought disadvantageous, 'Alivardī Khān set on him some trusted persons, and one morning when he presumed to "answer to a reprimand", had him killed.<sup>3</sup> This terrible and rather irregular execution of a powerful military commander terrified and silenced other recalcitrant elements; but the Afghan trouble was not over. Subsequently when 'Alivardī Khān became the *ṣubahdār* of Bengal his Afghan recruits proved almost a constant source of trouble to him. For the rest of Shujā' al-Dīn's rule 'Alivardī Khān remained his faithful and powerful

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, also *T.B.*, 139.

deputy in Bihar administering it vigorously and effectively and at the same time increasing his own financial and military strength.

#### VI: THE EUROPEAN TRADERS

The trade of the European nations continued according to the pattern already set during the previous period. Shujā' al-Dīn Khān's relations with them were governed in general by the privileges they had obtained prior to his accession to the *masnad*. There are of course occasional references, specially in the English records, to "exactions" and "hindrances" by the local authorities; but a close examination of the facts shows that these were almost always related to excesses or irregularities committed by the European traders themselves. At least five general issues, all arising out of their activities, appear to have strained relations between them and the government. The foremost of these was the combined attempt of the English, the French and the Dutch to prevent other European nations, especially the Ostenders, from establishing their trade in Bengal and to oust them, by sheer physical force, from the land. Secondly, while uniting against their common trade rivals, the English, the French and the Dutch were at the same time bitter rivals of one another; and they often complicated matters for themselves as also for the government by each trying to win over the local officials in its favour and against the other and also by trying to prevent local contractors and manufacturers from dealing with the other. Thirdly, the English had vastly extended their private trade and had begun a large-scale abuse of their privilege of issuing *dastakhs* (goods clearance passes) so as to cover not only this private trade, but also that of many of the local merchants allied with them, thus depriving the state of a considerable amount of revenue. Fourthly, since the death of Murshid Qulī Khān the English had stopped payment of the revenue in respect of the villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindapur which they had rented. The demand for this revenue was often misrepresented as "exaction" or "extortion." Fifthly, having failed to obtain from Murshid Qulī Khān the privilege of getting their bullion minted without any charge, the English attempted to use the Madras rupees in their Bengal



trade; but this was opposed by the government as well by Fatehchānd Jagat Śeth who had acquired the privilege of getting bullion minted at the government mint at a certain charge. The European nations had therefore to sell their bullion to Jagat Śeth and get money from him. This sometimes created difficulties for them.

Before Murshid Qulī Khān's death the Ostenders had come to an understanding with him according to which they had deposited a sum of rupees 30,000 with him and another amount of rupees 70,000 with the Jagat Śeth for the purpose of obtaining an imperial *farmān* for trade in their favour.<sup>1</sup> Murshid Qulī Khān could not procure the desired *farmān* before his death; but on the eve of his death he granted the Ostenders a *parwāna* permitting them to trade in Bengal. After his death the English and the Dutch combined to set at naught the deceased Nawwāb's *parwāna* in favour of the Ostenders and to oust them from Bengal. In 1730 an English squadron blockaded the Hugli river and captured one of the two German ships anchored between Calcutta and Bankibazar, about fifteen miles above Calcutta. And when the controversy arising out of this action was still going on they induced the *faujdār* of Hugli (Shujā' Qulī Khān) by a handsome bribe to send a body of troops against the Ostenders in 1733 in order to prevent them from trading in Bengal. Shujā' al-Dīn's government obviously found itself in an embarrassing situation because of the action of the *faujdār* of Hugli on the one hand and the capture of the Ostenders' ship by the English on the other. Ultimately, according to the English records, they "in conjunction with the Dutch" had to pay two *lakhs* of rupees to the Nawwāb's government for "his connivance at their taking the Ostend ships."<sup>2</sup> Most probably the money was taken for compensating the Ostenders. Their trade in Bengal however practically came to an end in 1733, though they lingered on till 1744 when they were finally ousted from the country during 'Alivardī Khān's time.

A greater source of irritation for the government was the vast extension of private trade by the English company's agents and

<sup>1</sup> A. Karim, *op.cit.*, p.209.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *H.B.*, II., 430.

their abuse of *dastakhs*. Shujā' al-Dīn frequently complained that the English were "screening immense quantities of Merchants' Goods, thereby defrauding the king of his customs." The dispute appears to have come to a head in 1734-35, closely following the affair of the Ostend ship. The *faujdār* of Hugli seized a number of bales of raw-silk and cloths which were being carried on boats under the *dastakhs* of the English. The council at Calcutta sharply reacted by sending a party of English soldiers who mounted the walls of the Hugli fort and, "after insulting the *faujdār*, brought away the goods."<sup>1</sup> On being informed about the incident Shujā' al-Dīn Khān sent reinforcements to Hugli and stopped the supplies of grain to Kasimbazar and Calcutta. "The English were constrained to purchase a peace, by consenting to pay three lacks of rupees to Shuja Khan; which sum the chief of Calcutta actually raised by contributions from the merchants, and remitted the whole to Cossimbazar, where it was paid to the nazim."<sup>2</sup> This shows that the goods that were being carried under the English *dastakhs* and the seizure of which had caused the trouble really belonged to the merchants at Calcutta. The incident did not put an end to the abuse of *dastakhs*; it merely illustrated the nature of the evil which in fact continued to grow throughout the period.

About the same time Shujā' al-Dīn demanded from the English the arrears of rent for the Calcutta villages, calculating it from the time it was last paid to Murshid Qulī Khān. The Dutch were also asked to pay the rent for their settlement at Baranagar. The latter rather promptly paid up their rent, but the English continued to avoid payment till the beginning of 1736 when the Nawwāb, by way of putting pressure on them, stopped a "great quantity" of their goods at 'Azīmganj near Murshidabad. It was only then that the Calcutta council asked their Kasimbazar factors "to accommodate matters with the Nawab". The Kasimbazar factors did so, through the mediation of Hājī Aḥmad and by making a payment of rupees 55,000.<sup>3</sup> No further trouble appears to have developed between the Nawwāb and the English, though

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 137.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> H.B., II., 432-433.

the latter's abuse of *dastakhs* and private trade continued in an ever-increasing scale.

#### VII. LAST YEARS AND ESTIMATE

According to the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālah* Shujā' al-Dīn Khān abandoned himself to "indolence and pleasure" in the later part of his rule, entrusting the "entire management of affairs" to Hājī Ahmad, the Rāi Rāiyān 'Alām Chānd and the Jagat Seth.<sup>1</sup> This remark, however, appears to be an unwarranted generalization. The triumvirate had been acting as Shujā' al-Dīn's advisers since the beginning of his rule; and as years passed on they naturally became more experienced and more influential. But the statement that Shujā' al-Dīn became indolent and addicted to pleasure and left the "entire" management of affairs to the triumvirate is not borne out by the facts. From the above brief sketch of his relation with the European traders it would be clear that he was vigorously dealing with them till at least 1737, that is barely a little over a year before his death. It was also during the last five years or so of his rule that some of the important events like the addition of Bihar, the suppression of the insubordination of the Rājā of Kuch Bihar and the zamindars of Dinajpur and Birbhum, and also the restoration of the government's control over the Hindu pilgrimage at Pūrī took place. All these clearly indicate that Shujā' al-Dīn had not really become indolent or inattentive to the affairs of government after the initial years of his rule, as the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālah* would have us believe. Probably its remarks are intended to emphasize the growing influence of the triumvirate as an explanation of the dynastic revolution which followed immediately after Shujā' al-Dīn's death. The closing years of his rule did indeed witness momentous developments in northern India which had their inevitable repercussion on Bengal in due course. The Marathas had been plundering and devastating the land as far as the neighbourhood of Delhi. In 1737 they established their authority over Nalwa and Rajputana and in the following year (1738) they forced upon the Mughal emperor the humiliating

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 133.

treaty of Durai Sarai by which the latter ceded to them all the territories between the Narimada and the Chambal rivers. And as if to hasten the process of collapse of the Mughal dominion Nādir Shāh of Persia was menacingly advancing from the west at the same time. Shujā' al-Dīn Khān breathed his last on 13 March 1739 just at the moment when Nādir Shāh, after having routed the Mughal forces at Karnal near Panipat, was marching upon Delhi.

Shujā' al-Dīn Khān shares with his father-in-law and predecessor Murshid Qulī Khān the credit of providing the land with a continuity and stability of administration which appears in bolder relief against the background of instability and confusion that had overtaken northern India about that time. Though their success was in a large measure due to the situation of Bengal out of the orbit of north Indian politics and to the services of some of their able assistants, both Murshid Qulī Khān and Shujā' al-Dīn Khān were men of abilities. According to an early British observer Shujā' al-Dīn's rule was "moderate, firm and vigilant" and was "calculated for the improvement of the country."<sup>1</sup> He continued in general the revenue settlement made by Murshid Qulī Khān, introducing only a few extra collections (*abwābs*) like *'imārat* (building charges), *karkhānajat* (work-shop charges) and *nazrāna* (presents), and sent the revenue more or less regularly to the Mughal emperor through the banking house of Jagat Seth.<sup>2</sup> There is no indication however that his extra collections caused any hardships on the people in general. On the contrary the prices of food grains remained considerably low and for sometime at least it came down in eastern Bengal, as noted above, to the level of that which obtained during Shāista Khān's time.

Both the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* and the *Siyar* bear testimony to the good qualities of Shujā' al-Dīn Khān. He "was a gallant soldier, munificent and very affable in his behaviour". He was extremely benevolent and any one who "had once chanced to have been of his acquaintance" received some favour from him. There was "not a man in his service whom he had not essentially obliged by some personal favours."<sup>3</sup> He used to maintain a

<sup>1</sup> Shore's minute, 18 June 1789, in Firminger's *Fifth Report*, Vol.II.,p.9.

<sup>2</sup> *T.B.*, 129.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 128; *Siyar*, I., 322.

memorandum of all persons known to him and "it was his custom every night on his going to bed, to peruse it and to set down under some name such a sum of money, as he thought proper (and this was sometimes a large one)... After having in this manner promoted the benefit of a certain number of persons, he effaced their names, and noted down another set; and this sacred practice of his he kept on foot during the whole course of his life."<sup>1</sup> He was particularly benevolent towards newcomers to his court; and it appears that due to the troubled state of affairs in the north-western regions of the subcontinent quite a number of people had recourse to Bengal. Whenever any person "endowed with some little capacity, or even with the air and language of a gentleman" appeared in Murshidabad, he obtained information about the newcomer and made suitable provisions for him.<sup>2</sup> On the anniversary of his birth he used to have himself "weighed against gold and silver, which were distributed in charity..."<sup>3</sup> On the eve of his death he made a present of two months' pay "to every nobleman, every man, Civil or Military, and to every soldier or trooper in his service, without excepting the servants of his household, or even the women that attended as menial servants in his seraglio; and a few days before his decease he sent to ask pardon from everyone of them, entreating their forgiveness."<sup>4</sup>

Essentially religious in nature, Shujā' al-Dīn paid great respect to men of learning and piety and administered justice with strict impartiality. The "poorest suitor was sure of being in his presence upon a footing with his very son", and "people acquainted with history thought that they lived in Nou-shirvan's reign."<sup>5</sup> He had a high sense of kingly dignities and exceeded all his predecessors in the splendour and magnificence of his court. He considered the palace erected by this father-in-law Murshid Qulī Khān too small and ill-planned. Hence he had it pulled down

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 325.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 323-324.

<sup>3</sup> *T.B.*, 131.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar*, I., 325.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* also *T.B.*, 132.

and "built another more suitable to his notions of grandeur". He finished the mosque begun by the unpopular and condemned official Nazir Ahmad in the village of Dehpara on the bank of the Bhagirathi, "and laid out the garden with great beauty and elegance," and called it *Farah Bāgh* or Garden of Joy. Here he used to retire in the spring with his family and domestic establishment "and pass his time amidst all the refinements of luxury. And once a year he used to give at this place, a grand entertainment to all the officers of his court."<sup>1</sup> It was in this garden and near the mosque that he had his mausoleum built before his death, "according to the custom of Sultans and Great Omrahs", and was buried there after his death.<sup>2</sup>

#### VIII: SARFARĀZ KHĀN: THE DEFERRED WAR OF SUCCESSION

Before his death Shujā' al-Dīn nominated his son 'Alā' al-Daulat Sarfarāz Khān as his successor. Accordingly Sarfarāz Khān ascended the *masnad* initially without any opposition. It is not known whether Shujā' al-Dīn Khān had sought the emperor's sanction or confirmation of this arrangement. Probably he did not do so in view of the fact that the central government then lay prostrate before Nādir Shāh. Shujā' al-Dīn was careful, however, to recommend to his son to regard Hājī Ahmad, the Rāi Rāiyān 'Ālam Chānd and the Jagat Seth Fateh Chānd "as the representatives of his father, and implicitly their advice in all affairs of moment."<sup>3</sup> This shows that the dying Nawwāb could realize that the triumvirate had become the real power behind the throne and that his son could continue to be on the *masnad* as long as he kept the three in good humour. But this was an almost impracticable behest to carry out; for the circumstances under which these three had co-operated with Shujā' al-Dīn and had remained loyal to him till his death had radically changed. Especially Hājī Ahmad and his brother, and their families and relatives, were no longer helpless wanderers in need of support and patronage. They were now not only well settled, but occupied the most important and powerful

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 132-133.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 152, 153

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

positions in the *ṣubāh*. While the Hājī himself was an influential member of the triumvirate controlling the over-all policies of government, his second son Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān, and son-in-law 'Atā' Allah Khān, held respectively the two strategic *faujdāries* of Rangpur and Rajmahal. His other relatives were also suitably employed in the army and other posts. Above all, his brother 'Alivardī Khān, as deputy governor of Bihar, had built up a strong army and a considerable following for him with the intention of capturing the *masnad* of Bengal. He had been waiting only for the death of Shujā' al-Dīn Khān and the withdrawal of Nādir Shāh from India to carry out the plan.<sup>1</sup> It is also on record that to facilitate his able and ambitious brother's cause, Hājī Aḥmad had attempted long before Shujā' al-Dīn's death to cause a dissension between his two sons, Sarfarāz Khān and Taqī Khān,<sup>2</sup> when the latter was alive.

Under the circumstances probably no amount of accommodativeness on Sarfarāz Khān's part would have ensured his success. Already the growing influence of Hājī Aḥmad's family had caused discontent among the friends and relatives of Sarfarāz Khān. Prominent among this rival group of nobles were the latter's three sons-in-law, Ḥafiz Allah Khān (Mirzā Amānī), Ghaznafar Hussain Khān and Ḥasan Muḥammad Khān, besides Hājī Lutf 'Alī, Hājī Qurbān 'Alī, Mīr Murtaḍā, Mīr Kamāl, Mīr Gadāī, Mīr Sharaf al-Dīn, Mardān 'Alī Khān, Shamsḥīr Khān Quraishī (*faujdār* of Sylhet), Mīr Ḥabīb and Ghauth Khān. Sarfarāz Khān's brother-in-law, Murshid Qulī Khān II, who was the deputy governor of Orissa, though not much attached to the latter, was nonetheless opposed to Hājī Aḥmad's group. This division of the nobility into two hostile camps created a tense atmosphere and afforded an opportunity to Hājī Aḥmad to win over to his side the Rāi Rāiyān and the Jagat Śeth by fanning their apprehensions that the success of the rival group would spell their ruin. Through the Rāi Rāiyān and the Jagat Śeth he also succeeded in drawing to his side a number of influential Hindu zamindars, specially the zamindar of Rajshahi. Portents of the coming

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 326.

<sup>2</sup> *T.B.*, 141-142.

struggle were clearly visible, and when Shujā' al-Dīn died, Sarfarāz Khān was so "apprehensive of the intrigues of his enemies, that he did not venture out of the fort to attend his father's funeral."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless Sarfarāz Khān, in obedience to his father's commands, entrusted the management of affairs to the Hājī, the Rāi Rāiyan and the Jagat Śeth and, in general, did not offer any injury to them.<sup>2</sup> Yet they, far from being conciliated to him, now attempted to encompass his ruin by working from within his ranks. Shortly after his accession Sarfarāz Khān received Nādir Shāh's letter, originally written to Shujā' al-Dīn Khān, asking the Bengal *nāzim* to pay allegiance as well as the revenue of the eastern provinces. The Hājī and the Rāi Rāiyan now induced Sarfarāz Khān not only to send the revenues to Nādir Shāh but also to have coins struck and the *khutba* read in the latter's name. And when the Persian monarch left India shortly afterwards, the Hājī and his brother secretly represented to the Mughal emperor Muḥammad Shāh that Sarfarāz Khān was a traitor.<sup>3</sup> 'Alivardī Khān also approached the emperor, through the influential court noble Isahaq Khān, seeking the patent of the *nizāmat* of the three provinces for himself, "with an injunction to fight Ser-efraz-qhan, and to recover the three provinces from his hands."<sup>4</sup> To facilitate this project further Hājī Aḥmad and his colleagues represented to Sarfarāz Khān that his army was too large and that by reducing it he would not only gain credit with the emperor, but also lessen the military expenses of the government. The "easy and credulous" Sarfarāz Khān consented to have half his army disbanded; and as soon as the men were dismissed from his service, the Hājī "secretly entertained them for 'Alivirdī Khān; to whom he sent twenty four lacks of rupees from himself, and his three sons; and others of their relations and friends made them large advances, to be repaid when they should get possession of the soobahdary."<sup>5</sup>

Before long Sarfarāz Khān came to know about the plot

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, also *Siyar*, I., 326.

<sup>3</sup> *T. B.*, 155-156.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar*, I., 328-329.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 327; *T. B.*, 157.



through his agents at court and decided to recall 'Alivardī Khān and his other relatives from their posts and to appoint his own men in their places. But as soon as these intentions were discovered by the Ḥajī he made solemn protestations of his relatives' loyalty, impressed upon Sarfarāz Khān the undesirability of making "so precipitate a change of men and measures", and entreated him at least to postpone the proposed changes for some time as it was "the season of heavy collection of revenues", there remaining only three months for the year to end. Sarfarāz Khān, who was "of an open and unsuspecting character", swallowed the bait and gave up the plan.<sup>1</sup> This was a fatal blunder on his part, for the time thus gained was fully utilized by the Ḥajī to complete the conspiracy and to ask 'Alivardī Khān to lose no time in marching upon Bengal with his forces. The Ḥajī also instructed his son-in-law 'Ata' Allah Khān, *faujdar* of Rajmahal, to intercept all correspondence between Bengal and Bihar so that Sarfarāz Khān might not know about 'Alivardī Khān's movements and preparations.

Being thus instructed by his brother 'Alivardī Khān left his youngest nephew and son-in-law Hāshem 'Alī Khān (Zan al-Dīn Ahmad Khān) in charge of Bihar and started on his Bengal expedition towards the end of Dhu al-Ḥijja, 1152 H./early 1740. All along his march he kept himself in touch with Ḥajī Ahmad, the Rāi Rāiyān and the Jagat Śeth, informing them about his movements and urging them to do everything possible for creating dissensions in the ranks of Sarfarāz Khān's supporters. 'Alivardī Khān was accompanied by a large and well-equipped army consisting of his Afghan recruits commanded by Muṣṭafā Khān and other Afghan leaders, and also a considerable number of Hindu soldiers recruited from Bihar.<sup>2</sup> Some Hindu zamindars of the province like Sundar Sing of Tikari and the zamindars of Turhut-Semai also accompanied him with their retinues.<sup>3</sup>

It was only after 'Alivardī Khān had crossed the strategic Teliagarhi and Sakragali passes and reached Rajmahal that the

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I., 330.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

Jagat Śeth, with "an air seemingly alarmed", informed Sarfarāz Khān about 'Alivardī Khān's advance upto that place and also delivered a letter in which the latter, under protestations of loyalty said that he had been coming to save his family from what was called "further disgrace" and asked Sarfarāz Khān to allow Ḥājī Ahmad and his family and dependants to join him ('Alivardī Khān).<sup>1</sup> Sarfarāz Khān was naturally stunned at the intelligence, but after recollecting himself he ordered the Ḥājī into custody and immediately sent a detachment under Ghauth Khān and Mīr Sharaf al-Dīn to oppose the further progress of 'Alivardī Khān.<sup>2</sup> And shortly afterwards Sarfarāz Khān himself marched with his principal nobles and officers<sup>3</sup> including Rāi Rāiyān 'Ālam-chānd, and also taking with him Ḥājī Ahmad, probably under custody. After three days' march Sarfarāz Khān reached Giria, about 22 miles north-west of Murshidabad where 'Alivardī Khān had also reached by that time. On the fourth day, according to the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālah*, the first encounter took place between the two armies. After heavy fighting 'Alivardī Khān's army gave way, and "the victory would have been decisive for Sarfarāz Khān" but for the treacherous role of the Rāi Rāiyān who, "seeing the fortune of his confederates would be totally ruined should Sarfarāz Khān pursue the advantage", persuaded him to give up the pursuit on the plea that the troops were exhausted with fatigue and that the pursuit should be resumed the following morning "when his men having recruited their strength would gain an easy victory over the routed and disheartened enemy."<sup>4</sup> Accordingly Sarfarāz Khān gave up the pursuit for that day and encamped at Giria, while Muhammad Ghauth Khān pushed forward with his detachment upto Suti, a mile and a half further north-west, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>2</sup> *T.B.*, 159. The *Siyar*'s account is a bit different. It says that Sarfarāz Khān allowed the Ḥājī, on his protestations of loyalty and promise to persuade 'Alivardī Khān to return to Bihar, to join the latter (*Siyar*, I., 333).

<sup>3</sup> *T.B.*, 160. Prominent among the nobles who accompanied Sarfarāz Khān were Ghaznafar Hussain Khān, Hasan Muhammad Khān, Mīr Muhammad Bākir Khān, Mirzā Muhammad Iraz Khān, Mīr Kamāl, Mīr Gadāi, Mīr Haidar Shāh, Mīr Dilir 'Alī, Shamsīr Khān Quraishī, Shujā' Qulī Khān, Mīr Ḥabīb, Mardan 'Alī Khān, Bijoy Sing and Rājā Gundrep.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 162. The *Siyar* mentions only one encounter in which 'Alivardī Khān is stated to have made a surprise attack and defeated Sarfarāz Khān.

encamped there.

Taking advantage of the pause in the hostilities 'Alivardī Khān turned back and encamped at Aurangabad, beyond Suti on the other side of the river Bhagirathi. From there he now opened negotiations<sup>1</sup> making repeated protestations of loyalty with a view to getting Hājī Ahmad released and also throwing Sarfarāz Khān off his guard. The latter was so entirely duped and "deceived by these professions, that he not only restored the Hājī to liberty, but even sent him to assure Alyvirdi Khan of his good disposition...."<sup>2</sup> The latter was greatly relieved to receive his brother and, in order the more effectually to deceive Sarfarāz Khān, spoke before his messengers who had come with the Hājī of his ('Alivardī Khān's) "absolute inability to oppose the mighty forces of Sarfarāz Khān; and having previously folded up a brick in a piece of cloth, which he pretended was the Koran, made a solemn oath thereon, that he would the next morning throw himself at the feet of Sarfarāz Khān."<sup>3</sup> 'Alivardī Khān also presented each of the messengers with two hundred gold mohurs. All the while the Jagat Seth had been busy in causing dissension among Sarfarāz Khān's generals by secretly sending them tips and promisory notes asking them to desert or deceive the latter.<sup>4</sup> After the Hājī's arrival, and as a final act of preparation for a surprise attack, 'Alivardī Khān sent a number of his trusted soldiers at night to Sarfarāz Khān's camp, "under pretence of congratulating their friends and acquaintance, on the conclusion of the peace; and kept lurking about the soobahadar's tent, till they should be called into action."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Siyar*, I., 333-336 for details of these negotiations.

<sup>2</sup> *T.B.*, 163.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar*, I., 336, translator's note. The author of the *Siyar* whose father held an important post under 'Alivardī Khān distorts this piece of information and reports it in just the reverse order, saying that the Jagat Seth sent promisory notes to 'Alivardī Khān's generals asking them to desert. This distortion is however correctly pointed out by the *Siyar*'s translator who further states: "...and we have been assured by one of them [the officers], still living that [he] himself had received such a Tip for Rs. 4,000, and had been desired to load the artillery only with earth and rubbish." The *T.B.* 166, informs us that when Sarfarāz Khān reached Komrah, about 20 miles north-west of Murshidabad, he discovered that Shāhryār Khān, the dāraogha of the artillery who was a relation of the Hājī, had filled it with brick and earth, instead of shot for the gun. The officer was replaced. Probably Shāhryār Khan was the officer alluded to by the translator of the *Siyar*.

<sup>5</sup> *T.B.*, 165-166.

Thus having thrown Sarfarāz Khān completely out of his guard 'Alivardī Khān made the surprise attack in the early hours of 9 April 1740. He left a body of troops under Nandalāl to engage the advance detachment under Ghauth Khān; and in order to make them believe that he was in that quarter, 'Alivardī Khān also left his elephant standard with Nandalāl. Then with the rest of his choicest men 'Alivardī Khān forded the river and was conducted near Sarfarāz Khān's camp in the dark of night by the men of Rāmkānta, zamindar of Rajshahi.<sup>1</sup> At day-break 'Alivardī Khān commenced attack simultaneously from the front and the rear of the camp. Sarfarāz Khān was then engaged in his morning prayers. His soldiers found little time to organize themselves for defence; and partly out of confusion and partly on account of the seeds of dissension already sown among them, many of them deserted to the enemy. With the rest of his devoted men including a "small party of Abyssinians" Sarfarāz Khān made a gallant charge. Of his men Mardan 'Alī Khān and his contingent, being routed, were obliged to flee, while Mīr Kamāl, Mīr Gadāi, Mīr Sīraj al-Dīn, Hājī Lutf 'Alī Khān, Hājī Qurbān 'Alī and some others fell fighting. Sarfarāz Khān's elephant driver advised him to escape, but he disdainfully refused to do so and shortly after fell fighting, being struck by a bullet in his forehead. Mīr Dilir 'Alī, hearing of Sarfarāz Khān's death, "refused to survive his good master and friend", and with sixteen men rushed on the enemy and fell fighting. Similarly Bijoy Sing, a Rajput, made a heroic dash on the enemy and was shot dead just at the moment he aimed his spear at 'Alivardī Khān. "In fact", comments the *Siyar*, "few soldiers and few friends in Hindustan ever proved so zealous as those of Ser-efraz-qhan's."<sup>2</sup>

The advance detachment under Ghauth Khān and Mīr Sharaf al-Dīn had in the meantime completely routed the troops under Nandalāl. Deceived by the elephant standard they mistook Nandalāl for 'Alivardī Khān, and dragging him from his elephant, put him to death. Next they advanced towards Sarfarāz Khān's

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I., 339.

camp only to find him killed and 'Alivardī Khān standing victorious in the field. The two chiefs, however, refused to submit and made a gallant attack with their small party. Ghauth Khān and his two sons fell fighting, while Sharaf al-Dīn, after continuing the fight with about sixty men and finding that the day was lost quitted the field and escaped towards Burdwan. Mīr Ḥabīb, Shamsḥīr Khān Quraishī and some others also escaped from the field instead of submitting to 'Alivardī Khān. The Rāi Rāiyān 'Ālam Chānd received an arrow-shot on the right hand, "by way of retribution for his treachery". He flung himself into the river and after reaching home half-dead committed suicide by swallowing diamond-dust, "out of shame and contrition for his vile conduct."<sup>1</sup> Amidst the confusion caused by Ghauth Khān's and Mīr Sharaf al-Dīn's heroic fight the elephant driver of Sarfarāz Khān quickly carried his corpse to Murshidabad. Similarly the deceased Nawwāb's two sons-in-law, Ghaznafar Ḥussain Khān and Ḥasan Muḥammad Khān, together with some others, succeeded in escaping to Murshidabad where they buried at night Sarfarāz Khān's corpse, hurriedly threw up entrenchments and prepared to fight. They did not, however, receive any encouragement from the vanquished troops and therefore abandoned their plan for resistance and prepared themselves for making submission to the victor.

Thus did 'Alivardī Khān come to occupy the *masnad* of Bengal. Superficially Sarfarāz Khān's failure was due to his simple-minded piousness and his continued trust in the words of persons whose insincerity and enmity had at least been detected. He certainly lacked the duplicity and ruthlessness required to deal with the conspiracy and treachery of persons strongly entrenched around him in positions of power and trust. His vacillation and apparent weakness might have been due to his awareness of the great power of his adversaries and the extensiveness of their conspiracy against him. In any case the battle of Giria and Sarfarāz Khān's fall was in essence a result of the forces which both Murshid Qulī Khān and Shujā' al-Dīn Khān had reared and

<sup>1</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 320; also *T.B.*, 172.

which, after only seventeen years, were to enact a similar drama at the field of Plassey. In both the cases historians have generally sought an explanation of the outcome in the personal character of the fallen heroes - a rather *ex post facto* judgement on them. Such at any rate is the case with the *Tawārikh-i-Bangālāh* which represents Sarfarāz Khān as a pleasure-loving youth addicted to women, though, somewhat inconsistently, it also says that the prince was much devoted to the "external forms" of religion patronizing many of his father's *qārīs* (Qur'ān readers).<sup>1</sup> Probably the *Siyar*'s remarks about him are nearer the mark. Sarfarāz Khān, it says, was "only a pious man addicted to the practices of devotion, and extremely regular in his stated prayers. He fasted three full months besides the blessed month of the Ramazan, and was scrupulous in the discharge of the several duties prescribed throughout the year; but at the same time he proved greatly deficient in that keenness of discernment, and that extent of mind, so indispensably necessary in a Sovereign Prince."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *T.B.*, 126-127.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I, 326.

## CHAPTER XXV

### 'ALĪVARDĪ KHĀN: INTERNAL DISSENSIONS AND FOREIGN INTRUSIONS (1740-1756)

#### I: 'ALĪVARDĪ KHĀN'S ACCESSION TO THE BENGAL MASNAD

'Alivardī Khān used his victory with intelligence and moderation. He did not immediately march upon Murshidabad, but advanced upto Gobra, a few miles away from the city, where he encamped with his army, sending his brother Ḥājī Aḥmad in advance to the capital to proclaim his victory, secure the late Nawwāb's treasures and effects and to win over the officers and inhabitants of Murshidabad by promising them a general pardon and protection of life and property.<sup>1</sup> This was undoubtedly a wise step on 'Alivardī Khān's part, for if he had marched his troops into the city immediately after the victory, as the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* rightly points out, "it would have been impossible to have restrained them from plundering the treasures and effects of Sarfarāz Khān."<sup>2</sup> Ḥājī Aḥmad's task seems to have been facilitated by his previous contact and understanding with the important men and officers in the city. Thus with the help of Yāsīn Khān, the *faujdar* of Murshidabad, he set guards on Sarfarāz Khān's treasury and family and secured the public offices. On the fourth day 'Alivardī Khān entered Murshidabad, ascended the *masnad* and received obeisance and presents from the public officers, military men and principal citizens. He took possession of the late Nawwāb's huge treasures, accumulated since Murshīd Qulī Khān's time and "reckoned by Crors only", and also confiscated the properties of some of Sarfarāz Khān's close associates like Ḥājī Lutf 'Alī, Minuchihr Khān and Mīr Murtaḍā who had fallen in the battle. Sarfarāz Khān's family members including his sister Nafisa Begam were however treated with kindness and respect. They

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 173; *Siyar*, I, 339-340; *Riyād*, 320-321.

<sup>2</sup> T.B., 173. The *Riyād*'s statement that 'Alivardī Khān remained encamped outside the city for three days "in order to overlook the sacking of the City and the loot of Sarfarāz Khān's treasures at the hands of Afghans and Bhalahs" (p. 321) does not sound reasonable, for in his own interest 'Alivardī Khān could not have allowed the plunder of the late Nawwāb's treasures by the troops.

were allowed to retain their personal estates and properties and were granted suitable maintenance allowances. After some time Sarfarāz Khān's wives and children, and also Nafīsa Begam, were sent away to Dacca, obviously to prevent them from being the nucleus of disaffection and opposition to 'Alivardī Khān's regime. Nafīsa Begam adopted as her child Aga Bābā Kuchak, a minor son of Sarfarāz Khān's, and entered the service of the Dacca governor Nawāzish Muḥammad as the governess of his female establishment.

As usual, 'Alivardī Khān's next important work was the redistribution of key administrative posts among his relatives and adherents. His youngest nephew and son-in-law Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān, who had been left in charge of Bihar, was now confirmed in that province as its *nā'ib sūbahdār* or governor. The *nā'ib-sūbahdārī* of the province of Jahāngīrnagar (Dacca) including Raushan Ābād (Tripura) and Sylhet, together with the nominal *dīwānī* of Bengal, was conferred on his eldest nephew and son-in-law Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān, with Ḥusain Qulī Khān, an adherent, as his deputy. The *nā'ib-sūbahdārī* of Orissa, pending the recovery of that territory from the hands of Sarfarāz Khān's brother-in-law Murshid Qulī Khān II, was reserved for 'Alivardī Khān's second son-in-law, Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān. The *faujdārī* of Rangpur, which had hitherto been held by Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān, was given to 'Alivardī Khān's brother, Qāsim 'Alī Khān. 'Atā' Allah Khān, the younger son-in-law of Ḥājī Aḥmad, was continued in the strategic *faujdārī* of Rajmahal with an addition to his jurisdiction to include Bhagalpur. The paymastership of the old army (that is the army in Bengal, who had not come from Bihar with 'Alivardī Khān) was entrusted to Mīr Ja'far Khān, husband to 'Alivardī Khān's sister-in-law; while that of the new army was given to another of his relatives named Naṣr 'Alī Khān. The Rāi Rāiyān 'Ālam Chānd having died, his *peshkā*r (clerk) Chin Rāi was now given the title of Rāi Rāiyān and appointed deputy *dīwān* of Bengal; while Jānakirām, hitherto 'Alivardī Khān's *dīwān* of the household, was appointed *dīwān* of the miscellaneous departments. Other relatives and supporters like Nūr Allah Beg Khān, Faqīr Allah Beg Khān, Ḥaidar 'Alī Khān,



etc. were appointed in other important posts with promotions in *manṣabs* (ranks) and *jāgīrs*. 'Alivardī Khān's grandson by his youngest daughter, Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī (son of Zain al-Dīn Ahmad Khān) was now decorated with the title of Sirāj al-Daulah Shāh Qulī Khān Bahādur and was given the nominal command of the *nawwāra* (fleet of war-boats) at Jahāngīrnagar; while his younger brother, Mirzā Mehdi 'Alī, was given the title of Ikram al-Daulah Badshā Qulī Khān and was adopted as a son by Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān, as he had no child of his own.

At the same time 'Alivardī Khān took steps to regularize his position by obtaining the formal sanction and appointment by the emperor. The latter's power and prestige had been terribly shaken by Nādir Shāh's devastating invasion (1739), and he had now practically no course open before him but to connive at or recognize the usurpation. 'Alivardī Khān, however, needed such sanction in order to legalize his position in the eyes of his contemporaries, many of whom, we are told, "viewed with sentiments of horror and detestation" the "black ingratitude he had been guilty of" towards his protector and benefactor's son;<sup>1</sup> and also to disarm the further opposition of the late Nawwāb's supporters and relatives who still held Orissa. Already the emperor Muḥammad Shāh had deputed one of his officers named Murād Khān to receive the treasures of Sarfarāz Khān and the revenue of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> 'Alivardī Khān now sent through this Murād Khān to the emperor rupees forty lakhs on account of Sarfarāz Khān's treasures and another fourteen lakhs as tribute, besides the usual provincial revenue.<sup>3</sup> 'Alivardī Khān also conciliated the powerful nobles and ministers at the Delhi court like the Vizier Qamar al-Dīn and Āṣaf Jāh Nizām al-Mulk by paying them respectively rupees three lakhs and one lakh. He also won over to his side the late Nawwāb's agent at the Delhi court, Rājā Jugol Kishor.<sup>4</sup> By all these means 'Alivardī Khān succeeded in placating

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 341.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>3</sup> *T.B.*, 175; *Riyād*, 322. According to the *Siyar* (I., 347) 'Alivardī Khān delivered to Murād Khān "Seventy lacks in jewels, with much gold and silver furniture; a quantity of precious staffs, and number of elephants and horses", as the confiscated property of Sarfarāz Khān; and also made a present to Murād Khān, "every way suitable to his rank and to the occasion."

<sup>4</sup> *Riyād*, 322.

the emperor Muḥammad Shāh who, obviously making the best of a rather helpless situation, formally conferred upon him the *nizāmat* of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. On his part 'Alīvardī Khān undertook to pay annually "the accustomed revenue of one crore and thirty lacks."<sup>1</sup> This arrangement appears to have been completed some five months after the battle of Giria, in Rajab, 1153 (end of 1740).<sup>2</sup>

#### II. ATTEMPTED SUBJUGATION OF ORISSA

Thus having regularized his accession to the *masnad* of Bengal 'Alīvardī Khān turned his attention to Orissa which was being held by Murshid Qulī Khān II, Sarfarāz Khān's brother-in-law. Already at the commencement of his march against Sarfarāz Khān 'Alīvardī Khān had asked Murshid Qulī Khān II to join him, but the latter did not do so;<sup>3</sup> nor did he respond promptly to Sarfarāz Khān's call for support, but was only about to send an auxiliary force when the news of Sarfarāz Khān's fall and 'Alīvardī Khān's mastery over Bengal reached him.<sup>4</sup> At this sudden turn of events Murshid Qulī Khān II became apprehensive of his own position and began strenuous preparations for defence. At the same time he deputed to Murshidabad Mukhlis 'Alī Khān, Ḥājī Aḥmad's son-in-law, who had been long in his service, to negotiate a reconciliation.<sup>5</sup> According to both the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* and the *Riyād*, 'Alīvardī Khān and his brother Ḥājī Aḥmad sent Mukhlis 'Alī Khān back to Orissa to convey to Murshid Qulī Khān II outward hopes of an accommodation but secretly to sow the seeds of treason among his army officers and to seduce them.<sup>6</sup> The *Siyar*, however, puts the blame on Murshid Qulī Khān II saying that the prospects of an understanding were "marred by the intrigues" of the latter's wife (Sarfarāz Khān's sister) and their son-in-law Mirzā Bāqir Khān who instigated him

<sup>1</sup> *T.B.*, 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I., 347.

<sup>3</sup> *T.B.*, 177.

<sup>4</sup> *Riyād*, 325.

<sup>5</sup> *T.B.*, 178; *Riyād*, 325. The *Siyar* does not make any mention of Mukhlis 'Alī Khān, but says that Murshid Qulī Khān sent one "Aga-mahmed-taky of Surat, to probe Aaly-verdy-qhan's designs, and to manage a treaty with him..." (I., 348)

<sup>6</sup> *T.B.*, 178; *Riyād*, 325.

to avenge Sarfarāz Khān's death.<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, it is clear from the three sources that some sort of negotiations took place between the two sides and that ultimately it was 'Alīvardī Khān, not Murshid Qulī Khān II, who marched out with his army and advanced into Orissa. This was but natural, for having occupied the *masnad* of Bengal through intrigue and war, and being then at the head of a victorious and powerful army consisting of a large number of sturdy Afghans and Bahliā Hindus of Bihar, and being also in possession of the emperor's formal appointment, 'Alīvardī Khān could hardly brook the existence of any capable relative of the fallen Nawwāb in possession of a fairly large province. Obviously 'Alīvardī Khān also failed to foresee the advantage of keeping Murshid Qulī Khān II in possession of Orissa as a subordinate ally and a buffer state between himself and the rising power of the Marathas.

Early in 1741 'Alīvardī Khān marched against Orissa at the head of a huge army and immense artillery.<sup>2</sup> On coming to know this Murshid Qulī Khān II left his family and treasures in the fort of Barahbati, near Cuttack, and advanced with his army and two sons-in-law, Mirzā Muḥammad Bāqir, a prince of Persia, and 'Atā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Khān, to a strategic and naturally defensible position near Balasore where he entrenched himself between the hills and a river with steep banks. 'Alīvardī Khān reached Midnapur without any trouble; but beyond that point the zamindars on the frontiers of Orissa, who were favourably disposed towards Murshid Qulī Khān II, did not like the Bengal army's march over their estates and into Orissa. Specially the zamindar of Mayurbhanj, Rājā Jagardhar Bhanj (or Raghunāth Bhanj) placed his forces on the other side of the river Subarnarekhā at Rājghāt and opposed 'Alīvardī Khān's crossing the ferry. The latter could cross the river only after having cannonaded and dispersed the Rājā's troops into the nearby forests. 'Alīvardī Khān next arrived at Rāmchandrapur, about three miles away from Murshid Qulī Khān's entrenchment. Realizing the

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 348-349.

<sup>2</sup> According to the *Riyād* (p. 327) 'Alīvardī Khān's forces numbered about one lakh "cavalry and infantry". The *Siyar* (I., 349) puts the figure to "ten or twelve thousand picked troops".

strong and formidable position of the latter's position 'Alivardī Khān did not think it prudent to commence an immediate attack and remained encamped at Rāmchandrapur for about a month carrying on sundry negotiations and trying through Mukhlēs Khān and other agents to entice Murshid Qulī Khān out of his strong post and otherwise to seduce his officers. In the meantime 'Alivardī Khān faced an acute shortage of provisions, specially as the hostile zamindars at his rear cut off his lines of supplies. The *Siyar* thus describes 'Alivardī Khān's position:<sup>1</sup>

"His natural daringness was at stand; to attack an enemy so incensed and so well intrenched, was impracticable. To entice him out of that strong post was the surest party; but his situation was now become critical. The Zamindars of the frontiers of Bengal became remiss in forwarding convoys to camp, and the few that would approach it, never failed to be intercepted by the Zamindars or great landholders of the Orissa, who seemed to dislike his person, and to look upon his camp as an inimical ground. Some provisions sent by the Governor Naraingur were intercepted likewise, and his sutlers being at a loss to supply themselves, provisions became very dear, and at last scarce and bad."

Such a state of things required only patience in Murshid Qulī Khān to starve the enemy into a disastrous retreat; and he was determined to do so. But Mukhlēs 'Alī Khān succeeded in secretly winning over 'Ābid 'Alī Khān, who commanded an Afghan regiment in the Orissa army, and also in inducing Murshid Qulī Khān's son-in-law Mirzā Bāqir Khān, by "artful contrivances" and by operating on his "youthful and ambitious mind" to come out of the entrenchment and give battle to the Bengal army. Thus, disregarding Murshid Qulī Khān's objections Mirzā Bāqir marched out against the Bengal army on 3 March 1741. This was exactly what 'Alivardī Khān wanted. Even then Murshid Qulī Khān and Mirzā Bāqir Khān, with their brave contingent of the Sayyids of Barh, drove back their vastly more numerous opponents, so much so that the elephants on which 'Alivardī Khān and his wife were seated were separated from their army and driven back to a considerable distance. At that juncture two incidents turned the tide of the battle. 'Ābid 'Alī Khān with his contingent and some other officers deserted to 'Alivardī Khān's

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 350-351. See also *T.B.*, 180; *Riyāḍ*, 328.

side. At the same time Mānik Chānd, *peshkar* of the Rājā of Burdwan, arrived with a strong auxiliary force and joined 'Alīvardī Khān.<sup>1</sup> The latter now turned back, and after a heavy fighting completely defeated Murshid Qulī Khān II who retreated to Balasore with two or three thousand troops. Apprehending treachery even from the latter he, together with his son-in-law Mirzā Bāqir Khān, embarked on a vessel and sailed to the Deccan where he took shelter with the Nizām al-Mulk Āṣaf Jāh at Hyderabad. 'Alīvardī Khān lost no time in coming upon Balasore from where he sent a strong advance contingent to Cuttack to seize Murshid Qulī Khān's family and treasures. Fortunately for the latter, before the Bengal contingent reached the palace, its faithful governor Hāfiz Qādir just succeeded, with the help of his assistant Shāh Murād, in sending Murshid Qulī Khān's wife and other family members and a considerable portion of their personal treasures to Chicacole, over 100 miles south-west of Cuttack, which country was then under the governorship of Anwar al-Dīn Khān, an old acquaintance and friend of Murshid Qulī Khān. From Chicacole they were subsequently taken to the Deccan by Mirzā Bāqir Khān.

From Balasore 'Alīvardī Khān marched to Cuttack where he captured the remaining treasures and effects of Murshid Qulī Khān II, and also confiscated those of his adherents. He then issued a general proclamation of pardon and security of life for all who would return to their duties, and "by these assurances of lenity and kindness, prevailed upon the zemindars to pay him nuzziraneh [*nazrāna*] and to conclude a settlement for the revenue." He remained at Cuttack for a month, settling the various affairs of the province, over which he appointed as his deputy or *nā'ib-ṣūbahdār* his second son-in-law Sa'īd Ahmad Khān, who was now decorated with the title of Nāṣir al-Mulk Saulat Jang. After leaving an army of three thousand cavalry and four thousand infantry under the command of Gujar Khān, a Rohilla Afghan, to assist Saulat Jang, 'Alīvardī Khān marched back to Bengal in triumph.

<sup>1</sup> *T.B.*, 181-182; *Riyad*, 328-330; *Siyar*, I., 351-353.

The conquest was however only superficial, for the people of Orissa in general, and the traders, zamindars and official class in particular, were at heart attached to the cause of Murshid Qulī Khān II. This is evident from the dramatic way in which Mirzā Bāqir, the latter's son-in-law, staged a come-back before scarcely a year was over. It appears that taking advantage of 'Alīvardī Khān's proclamation of a general pardon a number of officers and commanders of the dispossessed governor, including even Shāh Murād who had saved his family at the very nick of time, remained at Cuttack where "they secretly cherished an attachment to their old master, and especially to Mirza-bakyr, his son-in-law..."<sup>1</sup> Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān's own activities also facilitated the designs of his enemies. Desiring to lessen the expenses of his government and to save money he curtailed the pay and allowances of his army which disgusted many of his officers who returned to Bengal. Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān filled their places, at reduced pay, by local recruits who were in fact Murshid Qulī Khān's officers and adherents. Within a short time these people infiltrated in large numbers the rank and file of the army. To add to the misfortune of Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān, he now fell under the influence of an old acquaintance of him named Shāh Yaḥyā who had "once been in the same school with the young Prince at Delhi" and who now, "after running all over the Decan", made his appearance at Cuttack and soon became a favourite and a bosom friend with him.<sup>2</sup> Acting under the advice of this man Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān began to extort money from the rich people of the territory, "sending garrisons into their houses, and carrying women from thence, for the pretended purpose of hearing confessions and extracting enquiries."<sup>3</sup> So many violences were committed in this way that there was a general indignation all over the country, and the "citizens of the conquered capital" resolved to rid themselves of the oppression, so much so that, in the words of the *Siyar*, "one would have taken them to have had amongst themselves but one head, one tongue, one heart, and one

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 360.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

arm."<sup>1</sup> Nor had Mirzā Bāqir remained inactive. He attempted at first to persuade his father-in-law, Murshid Qulī Khān, to undertake the task of recovering Orissa; but as the latter did not show any inclination for the adventure, he himself began preparations for that purpose. He collected a sizeable force under him from the Deccan, including a number of the Marathas,<sup>2</sup> and posted himself on the southern frontier of Orissa and, with the help of the zamindars and traders in those quarters established a regular correspondence with his partisans at Cuttack. The nature of the developments would even suggest that Sa'īd Ahmad Khān's reduction of the pay of his army, his recruitment of local officers and soldiers and his extortion of money from the wealthy people were all the result of clever machinations by Mirzā Bāqir's adherents. Even Shāh Yaḥyā seems to have acted as a secret agent for the latter. Be that as it may, when Mirzā Bāqir found that both the military corps and other departments were dominated by his adherents and that the unpopularity of the regime was at its height he gave the signal for revolt and himself quickly marched upon Cuttack with his forces. There was a sudden rising in the capital in the course of which some of Sa'īd Ahmad Khān's generals were killed, he himself with his wife and children being made prisoners. Mirzā Bāqir established himself at Cuttack and "received the respects of the principal men of the city."<sup>3</sup>

The overthrow and imprisonment of Sa'īd Ahmad Khān and Mirzā Bāqir's capture of power in Orissa caused both surprise and alarm at Murshidabad. 'Alīvardī Khān is stated to have suspected that "such a mighty revolution" could not "have been compassed without its being secretly supported by Nizām el-Mulk, Viceroy of Deccan..."<sup>4</sup> Sa'īd Ahmad Khān's parents, Ḥājī Ahmad and his wife, were naturally perturbed and they are said to have even suggested the advisability of leaving "the government of Orissa to Mirza-bakyr, as a compensation for releasing his prisoner, with his whole family."<sup>5</sup> But 'Alīvardī Khān thought that such a step

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 362 and 366-367.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 363; *T.B.*, 185-186; *Riyad*, 322-333.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar*, I, 364.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

would seriously compromise his position and honour and therefore made extensive preparations for recovering his nephew and the province of Orissa. It appears that after his first Orissa expedition he had disbanded a part of his vast army. Therefore he now asked his generals to once again collect their forces. He asked them not to enlist "new troops", presumably to avoid delay and the risk of betrayal, but to "assemble such crops as were at hand."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly his Afghan generals Muṣṭafā Khān, Shamsīr Khān, Sardār Khān and 'Umar Khān got ready an Afghan force of about 15,000 horse, while the other generals like Mīr Ja'far Khān, 'Atā' Allāh Khān, Haider Qulī Khān, Faqīr Allāh Beg Khān etc. collected another force of some 10,000 horse. 'Alivardī Khān also ordered Fateḥ Rāo and other Hindu officers "to raise fifty thousand musqueteers."<sup>2</sup> With this army 'Alivardī Khān marched against Mirzā Bāqir, leaving the capital Murshidabad in charge of Hājī Aḥmad and Nawāzish Muḥammad with 5000 horse and 10,000 foot. When the Bengal army was at some distance from Cuttack Mirzā Bāqir came out with his forces to oppose them, leaving his prisoner in charge of some guards and five hundred Maratha soldiers with instructions to despatch him should the enemy come upon them. In December 1741 the two armies met on the northern bank of the Mahānadī. Mirzā Bāqir was simply overwhelmed by superior numbers. After withstanding their charge for some time he retreated to Cuttack with Shāh Murād and others of his followers and hurriedly escaped to the Deccan. A contingent under Mīr Ja'far quickly arrived at the spot where Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān was being held and recovered him before his guards could do him any harm.<sup>3</sup> His family were also soon recovered from the Barahbati fort where they had been kept confined. 'Alivardī Khān next chastised Mirzā Bāqir's friends and adherents, confiscating their properties including their branded

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* It is stated that among others Muṣṭafā Khān had 5000, Shamsīr Khān 3000, Sardār Khān 2000 and 'Umar Khān 3000 horse respectively under their commands. On the other hand 'Atā' Allāh Khān had 2000, Mīr Ja'far Khān, Haider Qulī Khān and Faqīr Allāh Khān had 1000 each, Amānat Khān 1500, Bahādur 'Alī Khān, Mīr Sharaf Al-Dīn and Shāh Muḥammad Ma'sūm had 500 each, and Mīr Qāsim Khān, 200 horse under their respective commands.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 366-367; *T.B.*, 186-189 *Riyāz*, 333-336.



horses.<sup>1</sup> After some time Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān and his family, together with the major part of the huge army, were sent back to Bengal. 'Alivardī Khān remained at Cuttack for about three months settling affairs there. He entrusted the government of the province to Shāh Muḥammad Ma'sūm of Panipat and then began his return march, accompanied by his "best officers" and a force of some five thousand horse and an equal number of musketeers.<sup>2</sup> On his way he attacked the Rājā of Mayurbhanj for his having sided with Mirzā Bāqir. According to the *Siyar* the Rājā made his submission and begged, through Mustafā Khān, to be spared his life; but 'Alivardī Khān disregarded the intercession of his general and when the Rājā came personally to ask for his pardon had him rather treacherously killed.<sup>3</sup> His territory was then "thoroughly plundered and sacked."<sup>4</sup>

### III: THE WAR OF RESISTANCE: MĪR ḤABĪB AND THE MARATHA INVASIONS

The war of resistance by the late Nawwāb Sarfarāz Khān's friends and relatives now spilled into the protracted and devastating Maratha invasions. After his defeat on the Mahānadi and escape into the Deccan Mirzā Bāqir recedes into the background; his place is taken by Mīr Ḥabīb, the right-hand man and generalissimo of Murshid Qulī Khān II since his deputy governorship of Dacca.<sup>5</sup> After the latter's defeat Mīr Ḥabīb appears to have engaged himself in effecting a coalition with Raghuji Bhonsle, the Maratha ruler of Berar, and to persuade him to undertake an invasion of Bengal.<sup>6</sup> The negotiations had obviously made considerable progress by the time Mirzā Bāqir captured

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 336.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, I., 370, 377.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Also *Riyād*, 377. The *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* and the *Riyād* state, however, that the Rājā of Mayurbhanj and his family took refuge in the mountains "beyond the ken of discovery".

<sup>5</sup> *Supra*, pp. 584-586.

<sup>6</sup> *Riyād*, 337-338. Both the *Siyar* (I., 383-384, 387) and the *Tawārīkh-i-Bangālāh* (193) state, however, that Mīr Ḥabīb was taken prisoner by the Marathas after their fight with 'Alivardī Khān at Burdwan and that the former then joined them and led them into Bengal. This, however, seems unreasonable. For Mīr Ḥabīb had all along been with Murshid Qulī Khān II, and there is no mention of his having joined 'Alivardī Khān. Secondly, if Mīr Ḥabīb was "wounded in three palaces and felled to the ground" before being taken prisoner at Burdwan, as the *Siyar* states, he could hardly have led the Maratha army immediately into Bengal, as he did by all accounts. Thus the *Riyād's* account that he accompanied the Marathas from the Deccan appears more reasonable.

Orissa, for, as noted above, his army consisted of a number of Maratha troopers. In thus fraternizing with the Marathas Mīr Ḥabīb and the other partisans of Murshid Qulī Khān II were doubtless actuated by a desire to take revenge upon 'Alivardī Khān and, in a way, were but imitating his example of recruiting the Afghans and the Bihar Hindus for his personal aggrandizement. The difference was perhaps that while the latter had the power to impose his will on his recruits, Mīr Ḥabīb and his associates were at best only unequal, or even subordinate partners with the Marathas. In any case the story is an "object lesson", as one writer aptly points out, "and illustrates the intellectual and moral desolation that had seized the Muslims in the eastern provinces at that time."<sup>1</sup>

Mīr Ḥabīb's proposals fell but on willing ears, for the Marathas had already been carrying on systematic raids in northern India upto Delhi. Naturally therefore they were happy to find a new avenue of their plundering operations opening up in the east. Specially, Raghuji Bhonsle had then fallen out with the Peshwa Bālāji Rāo, the other leader of the Maratha confederacy. Hence leaving northern and western India rather for his rival, Raghuji now turned his attention towards the east.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly he sent an army of 25000 cavalry under his general Bhāskar Pandit, accompanied by Mīr Ḥabīb, to raid Bengal.<sup>3</sup> The Maratha army by-passed Orissa and marching through south Bihar fell upon the Burdwan district of west Bengal early in April 1742. 'Alivardī Khān was then on his return march from Orissa after having driven away Mirzā Bāqir. In fact 'Alivardī Khān received the news of the Maratha invasion while passing through northern Midnapur. He had then with him only some four or five thousand cavalry and an equal number of musketeers, his main army having been already sent back to Bengal along with Sa'īd

<sup>1</sup> A. Salam's note, *Riyād*, 337-338.

<sup>2</sup> The *Siyar* suggests (I, 376) that the Marathas had been instigated by the Nizām al-Mulk of Hyderabad with whom Murshid Qulī Khān II had taken shelter. And basing on this suggestion K.K. Datta (*Alivardi and His Times*, p.56) asserts that the Nizām al-Mulk, in order to divert the attention of the Marathas from his dominion, instigated them to proceed towards Bengal. Plausible though the supposition is, there is no direct evidence in its support.

<sup>3</sup> The *Siyar* variously states the number as forty thousand and 25,000.

Aḥmad Khān. With his small force, however, 'Alivardī Khān immediately hurried towards Burdwan; but before he could reach that place the Marathas had already arrived there and had plundered and burnt part of the Burdwan town. At Burdwan 'Alivardī Khān was vastly outnumbered and surrounded by the Marathas who captured his baggage and provisions and cut off supplies by plundering the surrounding countries. He made a desperate attempt to cut through the enemy lines, but it did not succeed partly because of the folly of his camp-followers who mixed with the army and thus retarded their movements, and partly because of the lack of cooperation by his Afghan generals Muṣṭafā Khān, Shamshīr Khān and Sardār Khān. The latter were discontented for various reasons. Contrary to his promise not to do so, 'Alivardī Khān had disbanded many of his Afghan levies after the Orissa expedition and the rescue of Sa'id Aḥmad Khān. Secondly, Muṣṭafā Khān felt himself much slighted at 'Alivardī Khān's disregard of his intercession for the Rājā of Mayurbhanj and his execution. Thirdly, the Afghan generals much resented also the execution about that time of an important Afghan general in Bihar named Raushan Khān by Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān, 'Alivardī Khān's nephew and governor there.<sup>1</sup> Realizing the seriousness of the situation 'Alivardī Khān, accompanied only by his young grandson Sirāj al-Daulah, went at night to Muṣṭafā Khān's camp and there succeeded in pacifying the Afghan generals by fresh promises of good treatment and further rewards.<sup>2</sup> Thus having won their affection he next fought his way through the enemy and proceeded towards Katwa on the high road to Murshidabad. As he did so, however, the Marathas kept on harassing him by continual attacks from the rear and also by plundering the villages lying on the route. A contingent of swift Maratha troops even reached Katwa before 'Alivardī Khān "and sacked and plundered it, setting fire to such grain and provisions as could not be carried away." 'Alivardī Khān reached Katwa at the end of April (1742) and was soon afterwards relieved by provisions and reinforcements sent by Hājī Aḥmad and Nawāzish

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 379-381.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 382-387.

Muhammad from Murshidabad.

While 'Alivardī Khān and his army were recouping at Katwa, a section of the Maratha forces kept him busy there by flying attacks and incursions, while another section under the command of Mīr Ḥabīb made a sudden and bold dash upon Murshidabad, the capital, entered the city wherefrom he rescued his brother Mīr Sharīf, "together with the family treasures, dependants and children."<sup>1</sup> Hājī Ahmad and Nawāzish Muḥammad, who were in charge of the city, did not dare oppose Mīr Ḥabīb and shut themselves up in the fortress. Mīr Ḥabīb sacked and plundered the suburbs and commercial parts of the city, including the house of Jagat Seth wherefrom he took away at least 2 crores of rupees (20,000,000), besides immense treasures in gold and silver.<sup>2</sup> 'Alivardī Khān quickly followed on their heels from Katwa, but as he approached the city Mīr Ḥabīb withdrew with his Maratha contingent towards Burdwan.

As the rainy season of the year (1742) was approaching 'Alivardī Khān remained in the capital making preparations for driving out the Marathas from Bengal at the end of the season. The latter, on the other hand, also suspended their operations to the east of the river Bhagirathi and entrenched themselves at Katwa. Leaving Bhāskar Pandit there with a part of his forces Mīr Ḥabīb took steps to bring the whole of west Bengal under his control. With a contingent of the Maratha army he advanced upon Hugli, the principal port-town in that part of the country. He had lived there in his earlier years and "the place still abounded with many of his kinsmen and friends." With their help, and particularly with the assistance of one Mīr Abū al-Ḥasan, Mīr Ḥabīb won over many of the officers of the place to his side, captured the Hugli fort and established his authority over the whole tract by appointing *qādīs*, *muhtasibs* and other officers.<sup>3</sup> He appointed Abū al-Ḥasan governor of Hugli and placed a Maratha contingent there to help him. The zamindars of the locality, to save themselves from the ravages of the Maratha

<sup>1</sup> T.B., 193-194; Riyād, 341.

<sup>2</sup> Siyar, I., 393, note by the translator. Raymond (Hājī Mustafā).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 394-395; T.B., 195-196; Riyād, 343.

freebooters, settled with Mīr Ḥabīb for the regular collection and payment of the revenue to him. Thus all the country from Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) to Midnapur and Jalasore came under the control of Mīr Ḥabīb and his Maratha allies.<sup>1</sup> Many of the wealthy and respectable citizens, in order to save their family, honour and property, migrated across the Ganges to eastern and northern Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The ravages of the Marathas in the countryside of west Bengal spread panic even at the capital Murshidabad. "The peaceful inhabitants of this great capital", writes the *Siyar*, "who far from having ever seen such devastations, had not so much as heard of any such things,...became exceedingly fearful for their properties and families; and they availed themselves of the rainy season to cross over to the countries on the other side of the Ganga, such as Djehan-ghir-nugur [Jahāngīrnagar, Dacca], Mal-da, and Rampur-boalia, where most of them built themselves houses, and where they passed their lives. Even the Deputy-Governor himself, Nevazish-mahmed-qhan, crossed over with his family, furniture and wealth", and for sometime lived at Godagari in the Rajshahi district, "where he laid the foundation of an habitation for himself and family."<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile 'Alivardī Khān had been busy in making preparations for driving out the Marathas. He gained the heart of his troops, especially of his Afghan generals, by distributing a sum of ten lakhs of rupees among them and also by increasing their ranks and honours as he had promised at Burdwan. The strength of their respective contingents was also increased. Thus for instance Mustafā Khān's Afghan brigade was raised from five thousand to eight thousand.<sup>4</sup> Similarly the contingents of Shamsḥīr Khān, Sardār Khān, 'Umar Khān and others were also considerably increased. At the same time 'Alivardī Khān summoned his nephew and governor of Bihar, Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān, to come with his troops to join in the campaign against the Marathas. 'Alivardī Khān also wrote to the emperor, Muḥammad Shāh,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *T.B.*, 196-197; *Riyāz*, 343.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar*, I, 395-396.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 396, 399-400.

apprising him of the situation in Bengal due to the Maratha invasion and seeking his help in driving out the intruders, adding that the revenues due from the eastern provinces could not be transmitted on account of the Maratha devastations. Thus having made the necessary preparations 'Alivardī Khān marched against the Marathas at the decline of the rainy season, in September 1742 (1155 H.). He crossed the rivers Bhagirathi and Ajay near Katwa under cover of a dark night and by means of boat-bridges and suddenly fell upon the Marathas. They were taken completely unawares, many of their troops being then scattered in different places like Hugli. As a result the Marathas were heavily defeated and forced to retire towards the forests west of the Burdwan district. 'Alivardī pursued them there; but soon Mīr Ḥabīb gave him a slip, led the Maratha forces first into Midnapur and then into Orissa where he defeated and killed its governor Shāh Muḥammad Ma'sūm and took possession of the province. At this turn of the events 'Alivardī Khān again marched into Orissa. Mīr Ḥabīb and Bhāskar Pandit then withdrew towards the south. After advancing upto the Chilkā lake (southern frontier of Orissa) and finding no trace of the enemy 'Alivardī Khān returned to Cuttack. He appointed 'Abd al-Nabī Khān, a cousin of the Afghan general Mustafā Khān, governor of Orissa, with Rāi Durlabh Rām, son of Rājā Jānakirām, to assist him ('Abd al-Nabī) as his *peshkar*, and then returned to Murshidabad early in February 1743.

Mīr Ḥabīb's thorough knowledge of the countryside of west Bengal and Orissa generally, and his hit-and-run tactics really made the Maratha menace an unending process. In fact, hardly a month had passed after 'Alivardī Khān's return to Murshidabad when the Marathas appeared again; and to make things worse for him this time there were two Maratha armies, instead of one. The one came from the Orissa side under the command of Raghuji Bhonsle, and the other appeared from the Bihar side led by the latter's rival and personal enemy, Peshwa Bālaji Rāo. The circumstances of this second and dual Maratha invasion of 1743 were briefly as follows. Incensed at the failure of Bhāskar Pandit's campaign and to recoup the loss resulting from that Raghuji

Bhonsle himself, accompanied by his general Bhāskar Pandit and his ally Mīr Ḥabīb, now advanced with a large army towards Bengal.<sup>1</sup> He was also encouraged in this expedition by the head of the Maratha confederacy, Rājā Shāhu, to whom the Mughal emperor had earlier promised to pay the *chauth* but which had fallen in arrear for a couple of years mainly because of 'Alivardī Khān's non-payment of the revenues of the eastern provinces. Rājā Shāhu therefore asked Bhonsle to realize the *chauth* for him from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. On the other hand the emperor, in response to 'Alivardī Khān's request for assistance which was made on the eve of the last expedition against the Marathas, appealed to the Peshwa Bālāji to proceed to Bengal and expel Raghuji Bhonsle from that province. Naturally eager to curb the growing power and influence of his personal rival, and lured by the prospects of plunder as well as realization of the *chauth* from the eastern provinces seemingly under the emperor's sanction, the Peshwa readily responded to the latter's call and with a large cavalry marched through Bihar, plundering and sacking every town and village that fell on his way.<sup>2</sup>

Thus early in March, 1743, 'Alivardī Khān found himself between two formidable Maratha armies — Raghuji Bhonsle encamped with his army at Katwa, in the Burdwan district, and Peshwa Bālāji Rāo encamped near Barhampur in the Murshidabad district. Under the situation the Nawwāb opened negotiations with the Peshwa followed by visits to his camp which resulted in the conclusion of an agreement between the two sides. 'Alivardī Khān paid the Peshwa rupees 22 lakhs for the expenses of his army and also promised to pay him the *chauth* in lieu of the Peshwa's undertaking to drive out Raghuji from Bengal and Orissa and also to ensure that he would not invade Bengal and Orissa again. Coming to know of this agreement and conscious of his inability to confront the combined forces of 'Alivardī Khān and the Peshwa, Raghuji Bhonsle withdrew towards Orissa. Peshwa Balaji Rao, however, gave him a hot pursuit, overtook and defeated him and forced him to retire hastily to his capital,

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 408.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 418-419.

Nagpur. Peshwa Bālāji Rāo also then returned to his capital. Thus the second Maratha invasion was warded off partly by diplomacy and partly by the payment of a considerable amount to one of the Maratha leaders, the Peshwa Bālāji Rāo.

'Alivardī Khān was not destined, however, to enjoy peace for long. Almost exactly a year afterwards, in March 1744, Bhāskar Pandit invaded Bengal with some twenty thousand cavalry. This third Maratha invasion is remarkable in a number of ways. First, although Mīr Ḥabīb continued to be an ally and inspiring element for the Marathas, he did not personally take part in this campaign. On the other hand his place was taken by one 'Alī Qarawāl alias 'Alī Bhāi, who is stated to be one of the Maratha leaders who had embraced Islam,<sup>1</sup> and who had been in charge of six or seven thousand horse. Secondly, the invasion had the approval not only of Rājā Shāhu, the head of the Maratha confederacy, but also of the Peshwa Bālāji Rao who had in the previous year promised to 'Alivardī Khān to restrain Bhāskar Pandit from further troubling Bengal and Orissa. The Peshwa's *volte-face* was due to the efforts of Rājā Shāhu who effected a compromise between his two rival lieutenants, in August 1743, allocating to Raghuji Bhonsle the *chaugh* of Bengal and Orissa and that of Bihar to the Peshwa Bālāji Rāo, and requiring them both not to interfere with each other's sphere of plunder. Thirdly, and as if reflecting this unity among the Maratha ranks, Bhāskar Pandit proved himself in this invasion more aggressive and cruel, carrying on wanton destructions and plunder as he advanced into Burdwan.

Equally remarkable was 'Alivardī Khān's reaction to the invasion. He was extremely bewildered and surprised to find that although Bālāji Rāo had received a huge amount he had, far from securing peace for the Bengal Nawwāb, now turned Raghuji Bhonsle's partner-in-plunder. Instead of one, 'Alivardī found himself faced with two Maratha freebooters. His financial position was also critical. His revenue collection had fallen miserably due to the repeated Maratha invasions and plunders, while his military expenses had more than doubled during the last

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 347; *Siyar*, I., 430; *T.B.*, 199.



couple of years. He was also tired with such continual state of warfare, and "felt himself sinking under a perpetual labour of body and mind, that had no end." He became desperate and "resolved on getting rid of such an importune enemy by some stroke of policy." He decided to start negotiations expressing peaceful intentions and his readiness to pay *chauth*, and thus to induce the Maratha leaders to come to an interview and to see the last of them there. The accomplishment of this task was entrusted to his Hindu *peshkar* Rājā Jānakirām and the Afghan general Mustafā Khān. The latter hesitated, but 'Alivardī Khān "fired his ambition by promising him the governorship of 'Azīm-abād [Bihar] if he could bring in his net, both Bha-sukur [Bhāskar Pandit] and his principal commanders."<sup>1</sup> After prolonged negotiations, exchange of visits and presents by leaders from both sides, and above all, by repeated and solemn promises and sacred oaths by Jānaki Rām, who being himself a Hindu "passed whole days" in Bhāskar Pandit's company, the latter was ultimately induced to come to a conference with 'Alivardī Khān. The place fixed for the interview was midway between the encampments of the two armies, on the plain of Mānkarā in the Burdwan district (a few miles west of Barhampur in Murshidabad district). 'Alivardī Khān had a huge and well-contrived tent pitched there, concealing behind its double screens some twelve thousand of his select and well-armed soldiers. Bhāskar Pandit came on the appointed day, but not totally unprepared. He brought with him twenty-two of his leading generals, including 'Alī Bhaī, and attended by at least fifty chosen soldiers, all well armed. As soon as they all entered the tent, however, they were suddenly attacked at 'Alivardī Khān's signal, and were easily overpowered and killed to a man. 'Alivardī Khān then fell upon the Maratha camp with his full force and severely defeated and massacred the leaderless Maratha army. Only one of their generals, Raghuji Gāikwar, who had lagged behind, escaped with the rest of the scattered Maratha troops out of Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I, 431.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 432-437; *T.B.*, 199-202; *Riyāḍ*, 347-349.

IV: THE AFGHAN REBELLION AND THE FOURTH MARATHA INVASION  
(1745-1746)

Thus did 'Alivardī Khān get rid of Bhāskar Pandit and his ravaging horde by enacting almost a duplicate of the Maratha leader Shivājī's treacherous killing of the Mughal general Afḍal Khān. The transaction raised for 'Alivardī Khān, however, a formidable internal enemy in the person of Muṣṭafā Khān. The latter now insisted on the Nawwāb's making good his promise of conferring the Bihar governorship on him. 'Alivardī Khān now "thought it hard", as the *Siyar* puts it, "that a general promise made for a small service in a moment of need, should be insisted upon as obligatory, when that moment was over."<sup>1</sup> The real reasons for his unwillingness to fulfil his promise were, however, that the post was being held by his dearest and ablest nephew and son-in-law Zain-al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān, and that 'Alivardī Khān himself was now apprehensive of Muṣṭafā Khān whose power and influence had by then "risen to such a height, that they exceeded those of a subject, or even those of an equal. He pretended to no less than to a superiority; and his nation having poured in vast numbers into Bengal, and filled every part of Aaly-verdy-qhan's armies and household, he was always surrounded by such a number of them, that no one dared to dispute his will, or even to offend any one that bore the name of Afghan; so great were their numbers, and so close their union."<sup>2</sup> Hence 'Alivardī Khān endeavoured to please his veteran general by a variety of presents and additional honours and rewards. These did not, however, satisfy Muṣṭafā Khān who, after having been "fed for some months with to-days and tomorrows", assumed a defiant attitude, ceased appearing at court and assembled around him his brigade "which amounted to nine thousand horse, besides some thousand masqueteers."<sup>3</sup> The breach having thus taken place, old scores added fuel to the fire. 'Alivardī Khān had during his Bihar viceroyalty treacherously killed a powerful Afghan general named 'Abd al-Karīm Khān;<sup>4</sup> and Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān had more

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I, 439.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 439-440.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar*, I, 284; *T.B.*, 139. See also *supra* pp. 590-591.

recently killed, in a similarly treacherous way another powerful Afghan general named Raushan Khān. As indicated earlier, this latter incident was about to cause a defection of the Afghan generals during 'Alīvardī Khān's first encounter with the Marathas near Burdwan. Mustafā Khān and his men were now animated by a spirit of revenge for such killings. The *Siyar* alludes to this aspect of the conflict thus: "The death of an Afghan, be it for any reason whatsoever, becomes with them a crime not to be expiated by any atonement or lapse of time, although the dead man's relations should have already admitted a compromise; nor do the seed of revenge ever cease to vegetate and shoot up in their breastes."<sup>1</sup> To this attitude of revenge was added also a religious animosity. The Afghans were *Sunnis*, and as such entertained in their heart of hearts a deep dislike of 'Alīvardī Khān and his family and relatives who were *Shī'as*. Mustafā Khān is stated to have even declared that the *Shī'as* were "worse than uninformed infidels" who "must be served first, after which others may be minded in their turn."<sup>2</sup>

Mustafā Khān's defection and his mobilization of forces transformed the city of Murshidabad into two hostile camps, and for some time great panic prevailed among the citizens. 'Alīvardī Khān took all possible steps to defend himself against a sudden attack by the Afghans. Fortunately for him he was able to win over to his side three of Mustafā Khān's important lieutenants, Shamsīr Khān, Sardār Khān and Rahīm Khān who refused to join in the revolt. Being thus to some extent discouraged, Mustafā Khān announced his intention to quit the city of Murshidabad provided he was paid immediately the arrears of seventeen lakhs of rupees due to him and his brigade. 'Alīvardī Khān was relieved at this turn in Mustafā Khān's attitude and without referring his demand "to the usual officers for examination" ordered the full amount to be paid immediately.<sup>3</sup> Mustafā Khān thereupon left Murshidabad with his army and proceeded towards Bihar. His nephew 'Abd al-Rasūl Khān, who was at the time governor of

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, I., 438.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 451-452.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 442, 443.

Orissa in succession to his father 'Abd al-Nabī Khān, also left his post with his brigade and joined Muṣṭafā Khān. The latter's forces now swelled to some 14000 horse, besides numerous musketeers, with "an artillery of fifty pieces of cannon, with every necessary for its service, and above one hundred and fifty elephants."<sup>1</sup> Muṣṭafā Khān's intention was to capture Bihar from Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān. The latter, however, had received a timely warning from 'Alivardī Khān and had taken all possible steps to defend himself. Proceeding by way of Monghyr which he easily captured, Muṣṭafā Khān made his assault on Patna in the middle of March, 1745,<sup>2</sup> but failed to take it even after repeated attempts and, after having received an wound in the eye by a musket shot, was obliged to retire towards the Shahabad district in the west. In the meantime 'Alivardī Khān arrived from Bengal and, joined by Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān, pursued Muṣṭafā Khān who now moved further westward and entrenched himself in the fort of Chunar in eastern Oudh.

'Alivardī Khān could not continue his expedition against Muṣṭafā Khān because he had in the meantime established contact with Mīr Ḥabīb and the Maratha leader Raghuji Bhonsle, asking them to invade Bengal in 'Alivardī Khān's rear. Ever since the massacre of Bhāskar Pandit and his other generals Raghuji Bhonsle had been waiting for an opportunity to take revenge "like an untrodden snake retired within its hole". He had already sent a large number of spies as *Sanyāsīs* (religious mendicants) into Orissa where they endeared themselves with Rāi Durlabh Rām, who had been appointed governor there after 'Abd al-Rasūl Khān's departure, and transmitted all necessary information to their master.<sup>3</sup> On getting Muṣṭafā Khān's communication Raghuji Bhonsle along with Mīr Ḥabīb advanced at the head of 14000 horse, captured Rāi Durlabh Rām and after easily overcoming the resistance offered by a faithful officer named Mīr 'Abd al-'Azīz, made themselves masters of Orissa and the whole tract upto

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>2</sup> Ghulam Husain Ṭabātābā'ī, the author of the *Siyar*, was in the defence forces of Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān when Muṣṭafā Khān attacked the city of Patna and in subsequent engagements - *Siyar*, I., 445, 462-463, 466.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar*, II., 2.

Midnapur. Next they entered the district of Burdwan, in April, 1745.<sup>1</sup> 'Alivardī Khān was thus obliged to return hurriedly from Bihar where he left the Afghan general Rahīm Khān with his contingent to assist Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān. Being faced with two formidable enemies 'Alivardī Khān opened negotiations with Raghuji Bhonsle, but these did not succeed. The Maratha chief occupied Burdwan and, as the rainy season was approaching, remained encamped at Katwa. 'Alivardī Khān also remained on his guard in the capital, Murshidabad.

In the meantime taking advantage of 'Alivardī Khān's withdrawal to Bengal Muṣṭafā Khān came out of Chunar and advanced once again towards Patna. He was opposed, however, by Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān, assisted by the contingent of Rahīm Khān Afghan, near Jagadishpur in the Shāhābād district. There on 20 June 1745 Muṣṭafā Khān was about to carry the day before him when suddenly he fell dead by a musket-shot. This turned the tide of the battle. Finding their leader dead the Afghans turned about and withdrew towards the hilly region of Sasaram and Magror. From there Murtaḍa Khān, son of Muṣṭafā Khān and other leaders like Alif Khān (Sardār Khān's son-in-law) and Buland Khān sent urgent requests to Raghuji Bhonsle and Mīr Ḥabīb to come to their rescue in Bihar. Accordingly in September 1745 Raghuji Bhonsle and Mīr Ḥabīb passed into Bihar with their troops. They proceeded by way of Kharagpur, Tikari and Shahpura, all of which places they plundered and sacked, and after crossing the river Son made a junction with the Afghans, then numbering some six thousand. Raghuji's army, "by the junction of the Afghans, amounted now to full twenty thousand horse."<sup>2</sup> Immediately 'Alivardī Khān also marched into Bihar at the head of twelve thousand horse and was soon joined by Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān with his troops. In the middle of November 1745 a hotly contested battle took place near Rānī's Tank, in the vicinity of Mahilipur, between 'Alivardī Khān and the Afghan-Maratha coalition forces. The battle could have been decisive but for the lukewarmness or neglect on the part of 'Alivardī Khān's

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

remaining Afghan generals like Shams̄hīr Khān, Sardār Khān and Rahīm Khān who, it is stated, did not exert themselves fully and for which Raghuji and his coalition forces were enabled to avert a complete defeat.<sup>1</sup> However, 'Alivardī Khān's wife now took the initiative in opening negotiations with Raghuji for a settlement, but these were foiled by Mīr Ḥabīb who advised his Maratha and Afghan allies to give 'Alivardī Khān a slip and to march quickly into Bengal and fall upon the rather defenceless capital Murshidabad. This was done. 'Alivardī Khān again followed closely on their heels; but before he could reach his capital Mīr Ḥabīb and his allies succeeded in plundering the vicinity of the city and in withdrawing to Katwa (Burdwan district). 'Alivardī Khān pursued them there and defeated them in a sharp engagement in which a good number of the Marathas were killed. After this defeat Raghuji Bhonsle withdrew to his capital, Nagpur, leaving "two or three thousand Maratha horse and six or seven thousand Afghans under the command of Mīr Ḥabīb", who retained control of the whole of Orissa and south-west Bengal upto Burdwan. After giving himself and his soldiers rest at Murshidabad for about three months 'Alivardī Khān again marched against Mīr Ḥabīb in April 1746 and forced him to withdraw from Burdwan into Orissa. By that time a large number of Muṣṭafā Khān's Afghan adherents had also joined Mīr Ḥabīb.<sup>2</sup>

#### V: MİR ḤABĪB RETAINS ORISSA: THE SECOND AFGHAN REBELLION (1746)

'Alivardī Khān could not take any immediate step to dislodge Mīr Ḥabīb from Orissa mainly because of the defection of his remaining Afghan forces under the command of Shams̄hīr Khān and Sardār Khān. These two leaders were suspected of treachery at the battle of Rānī's Tank in the previous year. They were now found definitely engaged in treasonable correspondence with Mīr Ḥabīb and Raghuji Bhonsle for seizing the government of Bihar.<sup>3</sup> It was even suspected that they had won over 'Atā' Allah Khān, Ḥājī Aḥmad's son-in-law and *faujdār* of Rajmahal, "on promise of bestowing upon him the government of 'Azīm-abad when it

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Rivād.*, 353-354.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 355. Also *Siyar.* II., 16.

should be conquered."<sup>1</sup> In the middle of 1746 the Afghan generals assumed a rebellious attitude on the pretext of arrears of pay. 'Alīvardī Khān paid them up and disbanded the Afghan troops.<sup>2</sup> The two Afghan generals then left for Darbhanga in Bihar with six or seven thousand of their veteran and experienced soldiers. 'Alīvardī Khān felt relieved but could not undertake the task of recovering Orissa because he needed some time to recoup this loss by making fresh levies. He also awaited the outcome of the emperor's negotiations with the chief of the Maratha confederacy, then in progress, for a settlement. 'Alīvardī Khān rightly refused to be deluded by any verbal guarantee on the part of Rājā Shāhu or Bālāji Rāo. Ultimately in November 1746 he sent his general Mīr Ja'far with a force to drive out Mīr Ḥabīb from Midnapur and Orissa. In a battle near Midnapur early in December (1746) Mīr Ja'far defeated an army sent by Mīr Ḥabīb under the command of Sayyid Nūr; but when Mīr Ḥabīb himself came up from Balasore along with a fresh Maratha contingent under Janoji, Raghuji Bhonsle's son, Mīr Ja'far precipitately withdrew to Burdwan. 'Alīvardī Khān sent reinforcements under 'Atā' Allah Khān. The two generals, however, instead of marching against Mīr Ḥabīb now conceived a plan for overthrowing their patron and seizing power for themselves.<sup>3</sup> The plot came to the knowledge of 'Alīvardī Khān who hurriedly marched to Burdwan in March 1747, relieved Mīr Ja'far of his command, won over 'Atā' Allah Khān, and then inflicted a heavy defeat upon the Maratha troops under Janoji who retreated from Burdwan into Midnapur.<sup>4</sup> As the rainy season was approaching 'Alīvardī Khān did not hazard an expedition into Midnapur and Orissa and returned to the capital. Thus in spite of his repeated attempts he could not drive out Mīr Ḥabīb and his allies from Orissa and Midnapur which had remained under their control since the beginning of 1745.

Nor could 'Alīvardī turn his attention to Orissa till 1748, for the Afghan generals Shamshīr Khān and Sardār Khān who had withdrawn to Bihar, now created a serious trouble in that quarter.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Riyāḍ*, 355.

<sup>3</sup> *Siyar*, II., 24-25.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-28.

Far from dismissing the troops they had brought over from Bengal they started "inlisting vast numbers of their own countrymen" and, in conspiracy with Mīr Ḥabīb and the Marathas,<sup>1</sup> egged on Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān the idea of becoming independent or at least strengthening his own position by taking them (the Afghans) into his service. Being thus entrapped Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān decided to take the Afghans into his service, informing 'Alivardī Khān that "to drive these people out of the province, was not without its difficulty." When, however, Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khan was formally receiving the Afghan generals and their contingents early in January 1748 they attacked and killed him and a number of other nobles including Ḥajī Aḥmad, 'Alivardī Khān's elder brother who had been living at Patna at that time. They also captivated Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān's family including 'Alivardī Khān's daughter and seized the government of the province. The situation was specially alarming because about the same time Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī ('Abdālī), the Afghan hero who had succeeded Nādir Shāh in the eastern part of his empire, invaded the Mughal dominions from the north-west. This caused, among other things, another influx of the Afghans into India, many of whom found their way into Bihar to join Shamshīr Khān. "He wrote everywhere to his countrymen inviting them to come to his assistance; and it happened by a particular dispensation of Providence", so writes the *Siyar*, "that Afghans seemed that year to shoot up out of the ground like so many blades of grass.... So that all India being now in arms, and every part of it full of Afghans, not a day passed, but the inhabitants of Azimabad had their attention roused, and their fears awakened five or six times a day, by the sound of the Nāgara or kettle-drum; and on enquiry it was always found that this was occasioned by some Afghan Commander who was coming to Shimshīr-qhan's assistance with so many men."<sup>2</sup> It is also stated that by distributing an abundance of money which he had seized, Shamshīr Khān collected under him some forty to fifty thousand men of his own nation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 355-356; also *Siyar*, II., 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, II., 39-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-50.



On coming to know of this tragic development in Bihar 'Alivardī Khān naturally geared all his resources to recover his daughter and others, and also the province of Bihar, from the grasp of the Afghans. He tided over his financial difficulties in paying up the arrears of his soldiers by borrowing vast sums from the Jagat Śeth and other bankers and also from his son-in-law Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān.<sup>1</sup> 'Alivardī Khān also restored Mīr Ja'far to favour again, and left him in conjunction with Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān and 'Atā' Khān in charge of the defence of the capital. Knowing full well that during his absence the capital and its vicinity would be exposed to the Maratha depredations he advised the inhabitants to provide for their safety "by retiring to some sure retreat". This naturally led to another exodus of well-to-do and respectable people to the other side of the Ganges towards eastern and northern Bengal.<sup>2</sup> Thus taking all necessary precautions 'Alivardī Khān started on his Bihar expedition on 29 February 1748 (2 Rabī' II, 1161 H.). Mīr Ḥabīb and his allies also, abandoning their schemes of plundering the city of Murshidabad, closely followed 'Alivardī Khān "from the rear, tracking jungles and setting fire right and left."<sup>3</sup> At Bhagalpur (Bihar) Mīr Ḥabīb came upon 'Alivardī Khān but was defeated in an engagement there. The latter then further strengthened his position by winning over to his side Rājā Sundar Singh, zamindar of Tikari (Monghyr) who joined him with a powerful corps and other zamindars of the locality. Mīr Ḥabīb's ranks were weakened, on the other hand, by some misunderstanding between him and the Afghan generals regarding the payment he had promised them for effecting the revolution at Patna.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless they joined their forces and opposed 'Alivardī Khān on 16 April 1748 at Rāni Chawk, about 26 miles east of Patna, where the latter decisively defeated them, Shamshīr Khān himself being killed in the action.<sup>5</sup> The remnant of the Afghan forces escaped from the field, while Mīr Ḥabīb and his troops retreated towards Orissa. In this battle

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 46; *Riyād*, 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, II., 46.

<sup>3</sup> *Riyād*, 357.

<sup>4</sup> *Siyar*, II., 50-52.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-56; *Riyād*, 358.

Sirāj al-Daulah, Zain-al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān's eldest son, fought bravely by the side of 'Alivardī Khān.<sup>1</sup> The Nawwāb then recovered his daughter with her second son, Mirzā Mehdi (Ikram al-Daulah).

Although Bihar was thus regained from the Afghans, the death of his dearest and ablest son-in-law, Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān, and of Ḥājī Aḥmad, was a serious blow to 'Alivardī Khān. And the aftermath of the tragedy further weakened his position by bringing about a cleavage among the surviving members of his family. Before his departure from Bihar 'Alivardī Khān designated his second son-in-law Sa'id Aḥmad Khān to be the governor of that province; but this was opposed by Sirāj al-Daulah who claimed the post, as of right, because the province had been under his father's charge.<sup>2</sup> A good deal of misunderstanding took place between him and Sa'id Aḥmad Khān over the issue. At last 'Alivardī Khān reversed his decision and appointed his *peshkār* Rājā Jānakirām governor of the province. After making this and other necessary administrative arrangements 'Alivardī Khān returned to Murshidabad by the end of November 1748, taking with him both Sa'id Aḥmad Khān and Sirāj al-Daulah. Before his return 'Alivardī Khān also obliged 'Aṭā' Allah Khān (Ḥājī Aḥmad's son-in-law) to retire from Bengal to Delhi because, in addition to his former treacherous conduct, he was found to be in treasonable correspondence with Mīr Ḥabīb during the last expedition.<sup>3</sup>

#### VI. TREATY WITH MĪR ḤABĪB AND THE MARATHAS (1751)

After the battle in Bihar Janoji returned to his country, but Mīr Ḥabīb remained in control of Orissa together with Midnapur where he entrenched himself with a number of Afghan and Maratha troops. From 1749 to 1751 'Alivardī Khān made repeated attempts to dislodge him and to recover Orissa, but to no success. Thus in April 1749 he marched with Sirāj al-Daulah and Mīr Ja'far against Mīr Ḥabīb, but the latter avoided any direct confrontation and after setting fire to his encampments at Midnapur withdrew

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II, 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 68-69; *Riyāḍ*, 359-360.

into the jungles of Orissa. 'Alivardī Khān pursued him there but could not find any trace of him. Therefore he advanced upon Cuttack and the fort of Barahbati which was being held by Mīr Ḥabīb's adherents, Sayyid Nūr, Sarandāz Khān and Dharamdās. 'Alivardī Khān induced these generals to come to his tent by assurances of peace and then had them treacherously killed.<sup>1</sup> He then captured the fort after a siege of fifteen days. But no noble was willing to accept the governorship of Orissa on account of the fear of Mīr Ḥabīb and the Marathas. Hence 'Alivardī Khān was obliged to appoint a rather unimportant cavalry officer named Shāh 'Abd al-Rahmān as his deputy in Cuttack. But within a week after 'Alivardī Khān's departure from Cuttack Mīr Ḥabīb defeated and ousted Shāh 'Abd al-Rahmān and recaptured the fort of Barahbati.<sup>2</sup> Thus even before 'Alivardī Khān's return to Murshidabad his work in Orissa was undone. And as the rainy season had already set in he could return to the capital only through an infinity of difficulties and sufferings due to swollen rivers, torrential monsoon and bad roads.

After the rains 'Alivardī Khān once again left his capital and established a permanent encampment at Midnapur in order to bar Mīr Ḥabīb's advance into Bengal. This was obviously only a defensive posture. Even that was rendered ineffective by Mīr Ḥabīb who bypassed Midnapur and proceeding through the forest region west of Burdwan appeared near Murshidabad with a large band of Afghan and Maratha troops and plundered the whole tract round it early in March 1750. 'Alivardī Khān quickly fell back from Midnapur to Burdwan, but as he advanced Mīr Ḥabīb withdrew. Alivardī Khān again moved to Midnapur; but he was now faced with a new and unexpected trouble. His dearest grandson, Sirāj al-Daulah, assumed a rebellious attitude and marched to Patna to seize the government of that place from Rājā Jānakīrām. Sirāj al-Daulah had grown a man but had not yet been given any suitable post. 'Alivardī Khān had of course in his mind to nominate him as his successor, but this had not yet been made public. Naturally therefore the young prince grew impatient. He

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II., 81-82.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85.

was also much discontented for not being given the Bihar governorship after the recovery of the province from the Afghans. There were also a number of officers at Patna who were dissatisfied with the administration of Rājā Jānakirām. The leader of this dissident group, Mehdī Nithār Khān,<sup>1</sup> came to Murshidabad and instigated Sirāj al-Daula to take the hasty step. On coming to know of his action, however, 'Alivardī Khān left Mīr Ja'far and Durlabh Rām in charge of the Midnapur camp and hurried to Patna, disregarding the heat and rain of the season, to pacify and get back Sirāj al-Daulah. Before 'Alivardī Khān reached there, however, Mehdī Nithār had been defeated and killed by Rājā Jānakirām's troops. Thereafter the Nawwāb easily succeeded in persuading Sirāj to return to Murshidabad.<sup>2</sup> On his return journey 'Alivardī Khān fell seriously ill and arrived at Murshidabad by boat under intense medical care. In the meantime Mīr Ḥabīb, taking advantage of 'Alivardī Khān's absence and illness, marched upon Midnapur. Mīr Ja'far and Durlabh Rām abandoned the post and withdrew to Burdwan. Therefore 'Alivardī Khān, though not fully recovered from his illness, marched out of his capital and took his position at Katwa in February 1751.

Both sides were by now exhausted and tired of the protracted war. While Mīr Ḥabīb and his Maratha allies realized that in spite of their repeated expeditions and hit-and-run policy they could not obtain any permanent advantage due to the undoubted military genius and energy of 'Alivardī Khān. The latter, on the other hand, felt now the weight of his age, he being then in the seventyfifth year of his life. He was also much weakened first by the desertion of his Afghan generals and troops, many of whom had now joined Mīr Ḥabīb, and then by the death of Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad and Ḥājī Aḥmad, and, no less, also by the indescribable miseries and sufferings of the people and an equally ruinous strain on his financial resources. Moreover, there were also growing dissensions among the surviving members of his family. Thus both sides were inclined to peace. Negotiations were therefore

<sup>1</sup> He was the uncle of Ghulām Ḥusain Khān, author of the *Siyar*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Siyar*, II, 92-108 for detail of the incident.

started and conducted on behalf of the Marathas and Mīr Ḥabīb by his nephew Mirzā Šāliḥ, and on behalf of the Nawwāb by Mīr Ja'far. These resulted in the conclusion of peace in May 1751 (1165 H.) on the following terms.<sup>1</sup>

- I. Mīr Ḥabīb would henceforth be deemed to be in the service of 'Alīvardī Khān and would, in that capacity, be the governor of Orissa. He would pay the surplus revenue of the province, after meeting the expenses of administration, towards the pay of Raghuji Bhonsle's army.
- II. The Marathas undertook not to set their foot again on 'Alīvardī Khān's dominion in return for the latter's agreeing to pay annually a sum of 12 lakhs of rupees as *chauth*.
- III. The river Subarnarekha near Jalasore was fixed as the boundary between Orissa and Bengal, thus bringing the district of Midnapur finally within the jurisdiction of the latter.

The treaty was undoubtedly an acknowledgement of defeat on the part of 'Alīvardī Khān. He did indeed at last obtain peace for the people in his Bengal and Bihar dominions, but at the cost of so much sufferings and devastations and, eventually, also at the cost of Orissa and the payment of *chauth* to the Maratha freebooters. The fiction of Mīr Ḥabīb's having entered his service was only a theoretical device to give cover to the stark fact of the virtual cession of Orissa to the Marathas. At the most the province was now transformed into a buffer zone between Bengal and the Marathas, a position which 'Alīvardī Khān could have more advantageously and honourably obtained if he had suffered Murshid Qulī Khān II or his son-in-law Mirzā Bāqir to remain in possession of that province. Nor was the gain of Mīr Ḥabīb, after so many years of tremendous toil and tenacity, any the more real. For although his allegiance to 'Alīvardī Khān was only nominal, in reality he became a vassal of the Marathas. For over a decade he had been the guiding and inspiring genius for the repeated Maratha incursions into Bengal which would not definitely have become so murderous and protracted in nature without his help and cooperation. In doing so he was guided by a short-sighted policy of taking revenge upon 'Alīvardī Khān's treachery and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

usurpation, but by fraternizing with the Marathas Mīr Ḥabīb did more than any one else to break the strength of the Muslim political power in Bengal. "It would seem a despicable moral chaos had at this time seized the country," as 'Abd al-Salām puts it, "in which neither religious ties nor national sentiments were held of any account."<sup>1</sup> Nor could Mīr Ḥabīb long enjoy the illusive fruit of his life-long toil. For misunderstandings developed soon enough between him and his Maratha allies, if only because they had now no longer any common enemy to fight against. And only a year after the conclusion of the treaty he was treacherously killed by Janoji, Raghuji Bhonsle's son.<sup>2</sup> Mīr Ḥabīb's nephew Mirzā Šālih, now entitled Mirzā Muṣālih al-Dīn, was then appointed governor of Orissa by 'Alivardī Khān, with the approval of the Maratha chieftain whose jurisdiction over the province was now practically complete.

The loss of Orissa to 'Alivardī Khān was but insignificant in comparison with the other momentous consequences that followed directly or indirectly from the Mīr Ḥabīb-Maratha invasions. Their most direct and visible result was the ruination of the economic life in west Bengal. Each time the Maratha freebooters came, they plundered and burnt towns and villages and went away leaving behind them a lingering trail of devastations and miseries. For about a decade the people of west Bengal lived through a nightmare of general insecurity of life and property unknown in its history, which is vividly described in contemporary writings and popular ballads. The *Bargīs*, as the Maratha freebooters came to be called by the people, not only plundered and carried away their wealth, but also inflicted inhuman torture upon them. An eye-witness account states that the Marathas cut off the hands of their victims, and "of some the nose and ears; some they killed outright. They dragged away the beautiful women... After looting in the open, they entered the

<sup>1</sup> *Riyād*, 350-351, n.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyar*, II, 115-117. According to the *Riyād* (360-361) 'Alivardī Khān encompassed Mīr Ḥabīb's destruction by writing a letter to him "purporting falsely to be a reply to his message", asking him to do away with Janoji and so contriving its despatch that it was intercepted by the latter who then treacherously murdered Mīr Ḥabīb. It does not however appear plausible, for it then served no fruitful purpose for 'Alivardī Khān.

villages and set fire to the houses. ....It was only after crossing the Bhagirathi that the people found safety."<sup>1</sup> Agriculture and trade suffered equally, for the Marathas did not stop plundering the fields, but carried away cattle and domestic animals. Traders and artisans ran away with their articles and instruments - "the gold-smiths with their weights and measures, the grocers and perfumers and the bell-metal workers after closing their shops, black-smiths and the potters with their implements, the fishermen with their nets and ropes and conch-sellers with their own articles."<sup>2</sup> The Marathas "committed the most horrid devastation and cruelties", writes a contemporary English factor in Bengal. They "fed their horses and cattle with mulberry plantations and thereby irreparably injured the silk manufacture. A general face of ruin succeeded: Many of the inhabitants, weavers and husbandmen fled. The *arangs* [cloth and silk emporia] were in a great degree deserted; the lands untillied."<sup>3</sup>

There was an exodus of population from west to east Bengal, as all the contemporary accounts show. This had important social and demographic results. The districts west of the Bhagirathi became almost desolate with a very thin population, whereas those to the east had a corresponding and sharp rise in their population. There are many references in contemporary sources to the migration, among others, of wealthy and respectable Muslim families to the east and north of the river system beyond the reach of the Maratha horsemen. This is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the preponderance of Muslim population in east Bengal.

More important were the political results. Mīr Ḥabīb's successive invasions in alliance with the Marathas upto the very capital Murshidabad destroyed the people's faith in 'Alivardī Khān's ability to ensure peace and security in the greater part of his dominions and served to keep up the fact of his usurpation before the public eye, thus making the whole period of his rule appear as one of continued war of succession. The defection of his

<sup>1</sup> Account for Gangārām, an eye-witness, quoted in *H.B.*, II, 457.

<sup>2</sup> *Mahārāstrapurāna*, quoted in K.K. Datta, *op.cit.*, p.72; also reproduced in Kāliprasanna Bandopādhyāya, *op.cit.*, Appendix "Kha".

<sup>3</sup> J.Z. Holwell, *Interesting Historical Events*, 2nd edition, London, 1766, p.121.

Afghan generals and troops, their alliance with Mīr Ḥabīb and the Marathas, the attempted treason by Mīr Ja'far and 'Atā' Allah Khān during 'Alivardī Khān's engagements with the latter, Zain al-Dīn Ahmad Khān's fateful scheme of becoming independent in Bihar and even Sirāj al-Daulah's attempt to capture the government of that province, might all be traced to the same spirit of free-for-all engendered by those protracted warfares and a general consciousness of 'Alivardī Khān's usurpation. Above all the Mīr Ḥabīb-Maratha invasions paved the way for the establishment of the English political power in Bengal in more than one way. Highly adventurous and ambitious as they were, the spectacle of the Mughal emperor's helplessness before the Afghan-Maratha invasions on the one hand, and the internal dissensions and Maratha invasions into the heart of Bengal on the other, could not but stimulate the political ambitions of the English, especially as they were then already engaged in an armed conflict with the French for supremacy in southern India. The English had a strong fortification and settlement at Calcutta; and now, taking advantage of 'Alivardī Khān's preoccupations with the Marathas, and also with a view to protecting themselves the better against the Maratha intrusions, they considerably extended their military position in Calcutta. In fact during the second Maratha invasion of 1743 they had the famous Maratha Ditch of Calcutta constructed (which is now filled up and occupied by the Circular Road) to protect the exposed part of their settlements. During the Maratha invasions a large number of traders, merchants and wealthy people of the neighbouring localities took shelter in the English settlement at Calcutta where they were welcomed and given protection. This led to the rapid growth of the city on the one hand, and increased the refugees' faith in the protective power of the English, on the other. A major part of the cost of digging the Maratha Ditch referred to above was indeed met by raising contributions from the merchants and inhabitants there. Soon the English won over to their side a number of the influential zamindars, merchants and bankers, and embarked upon the scheme of capturing the political power of the country even before the death of 'Alivardī Khān.



VI. LATER YEARS OF 'ALĪVARDĪ KHĀN: THE ENGLISH  
POLITICAL AMBITION IN BENGAL

Thus the conclusion of peace with the Marathas did not in fact mark the beginning of a new period of peace and reconstruction; it was simply a stage in the process of decline and disintegration that had already been in progress for some time. The five more years that 'Alivardī Khān lived after the conclusion of the treaty were marked by increasing isolation and weakness of his family in the political life of the country on the one hand, and the growing political ambition of the English in Bengal, on the other. The isolation of his family was rather the result of successive elimination of actual or potential rival groups that had been going on since Murshid Qulī Khān's time. The latter's quarrel with the old Muslim nobility at Dacca, his removal of the capital from that place to Murshidabad, then the transfer of the Muslim nobles' *jāgīrs* from Bengal to Orissa and, finally, his efforts to secure his dynastic rule mainly with the support of a group of Hindu zamindars and bankers, had the effect of neutralizing the power and influence of the old Muslim nobility in the country. During Murshid Qulī Khān's and Shujā' al-Dīn Khān's time a considerable number of their relatives and adherents did of course come into Bengal. Indeed 'Alivardī Khān's family and relatives belonged to this group of new entrants. But before this new group could consolidate their position as a new nobility, they fell out amongst themselves. This was so because of 'Alivardī Khān's ambition to snatch the reins of government from his benefactor's family. And as he ultimately did so he pushed out of the scene a considerable section of this new group who were the supporters of Sarfarāz Khān and his brother-in-law Murshid Qulī Khān II. 'Alivardī Khān brought with him from Bihar more than ten thousand Afghan recruits with about half a dozen veteran generals; but when they all left him the circle of his firm support was terribly narrowed, being in effect limited to the members of his family and close relatives. He faced a shortage of suitable persons even to fill important posts in the state. Not that there was a dearth of capable Muslim officials and nobles, but that they had been alienated and pushed into the background, or were not

trusted by 'Alivardī Khān. Under the circumstances he had to fall back increasingly upon non-Muslim elements. Thus after his recovery of Bihar from the Afghans he had to appoint Rājā Jānakirām as the governor there; and when the latter died in 1752 his *dīwān* Rāmnārāyan was made the governor. After the conclusion of the treaty with the Marathas 'Alivardī Khān similarly appointed Rājā Rāmsingh, hitherto the head of his espionage department, *faujdār* of the important border territory of Midnapur. The eastern province of Jahāngīrnagar (Dacca, with Chittagong, Tripura and Sylhet) was also under the control of non-Muslim officials; for although Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān was its nominal governor, he lived at the capital Murshidabad looking after its affairs during 'Alivardī Khān's numerous campaigns and afterwards as his adviser there, leaving Dacca in charge of his (Nawāzish Muḥammad's) *dīwān* Rājā Rāj Ballabh and another subordinate officer named Gokulchānd. Even at the capital of Murshidabad Hindu officials held predominant positions, besides the non-official but very influential position occupied by the Jagat Śeth brothers. Early in his rule 'Alivardī Khān had appointed as his *dīwān* Rājā Chin Rāi who died some years afterwards when Biru Datta was appointed in his post. The latter died in 1752 and the post was given to the late Rāi Rāiyān 'Ālam Chānd's son Rājā Kirārchānd. He also died in 1754 when his deputy Umid Rāi (Umichānd) was made *dīwān* with the title of Rāi Rāiyan. About the same time Rai Durlabh Rām, son of Jānakirām, was made *dīwān* of the military department. He also acted as the Bihar governor Rāmnārāin's agent at the Murshidabad court.

Thus the outlying provinces of Bihar and Jahāngīrnagar, together with some very key posts at the capital, were under the control of Hindu officials and nobles. Naturally the stability of the regime depended on their continued support. But even 'Alivardī Khān could not retain till the end the sincere attachment of all his Hindu adherents. His taking of forced loans from the zamindars and the Jagat Śeth to meet the expenses of his campaigns irritated many of them. In 1752, after the conclusion of the treaty with the Marathas, his new *dīwān* Rājā Kirārchānd detected some irregular

financial transactions on the part of the Jagat Śeth and the influential zamindar of Burdwan (Rājā of Burdwan). They were obliged to confess the irregularity and pay back into the treasury an amount of "one cror and some lacs".<sup>1</sup> The incident left a deep sore in their hearts and alienated them from 'Alīvardī Khān and his family. Nor did Rājā Kirāṭchānd live long to lend support to the aged Nawwāb. Kirāṭchānd died in 1754 when, as already mentioned, Umichānd became the *dīwān*. Even at the time of his appointment this man was not sincerely attached to the Nawwāb's family, and, as will be seen shortly, he was the man from whom the English by then expected the most substantial help for furthering their political ambition.<sup>2</sup>

To make things worse for 'Alīvardī Khān as also for the Muslim dominion in Bengal, even his family was now seriously reduced and divided amongst themselves by death and dissensions. After the death of Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān and Ḥājī Aḥmad, 'Alīvardī Khān was left with his eldest and second son-in-law, Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān and Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān, and the sons of the latter and of the deceased Zain al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān. Nawāzish Muḥammad had no son or daughter. Hence he had adopted as his son Ikrām al-Daulah, Sirāj al-Daulah's younger brother; but in 1754 Ikrām al-Daulah suddenly died of small-pox. Overpowered by grief Nawāzish Muḥammad died in the following year (December, 1775). And a couple of months afterwards Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān, 'Alīvardī Khān's second son-in-law, died of a sudden illness in February 1756. Thus towards the end of his life 'Alīvardī Khān was left with his three widowed daughters and one grown-up son of each of his second and youngest daughters, namely Shawkat Jang (at Purnia) and Sirāj al-Daulah. Even these surviving members of his family were hopelessly divided amongst themselves. 'Alīvardī Khān had already designated Sirāj al-Daulah as his successor, and the latter was undoubtedly abler and more experienced than Shawkat Jang. But this nomination was not to the liking of 'Alīvardī Khān's eldest daughter Mihir al-Nisā' alias Ghaseti Begam who wanted to gain control of the *masnad*

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II., 114-115.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, p. 651.

through her favourite, Mīr Nazar 'Alī, who cut a great "figure in the heart of that princess, as well as in her household".<sup>1</sup> Even before 'Alivardī Khān's death she distributed a good amount of her treasures and gold among the troops and various commanders, "under solemm promises of fighting for her cause against Seradj-ed-doulah."<sup>2</sup> Shawkat Jang also was not favourably disposed towards Sirāj and was definitely instigated against him by Ghaseti Begam. Of the other relatives of 'Alivardī Khān, Mīr Ja'far was the most experienced, but his ambition and treacherous inclination had already been detected for which he had also been kept out of favour for some time. He was restored to favour only on the eve of 'Alivardī Khān's campaign against the Afghans in Bihar. As subsequent events show, Mīr Ja'far Khān had not given up his political ambition and lurked behind Sirāj al-Daulah and Shawkat Jang for the *masnad*. Thus towards the close of his rule 'Alivardī Khān's family stood isolated from other influential Muslims, largely alienated even from their Hindu friends, and hopelessly divided amongst themselves.

The situation was only conducive to the ambition of the Europeans, especially the English and the French who, as already indicated, had by then been engaged in a bitter rivalry with each other for supremacy in the east. It is noteworthy that the very year of 'Alivardī Khān's succession to the Bengal *masnad* witnessed the outbreak of the European war of Austrian succession (1740-1748) in which the two nations were ranged on opposite sides. As a sequel to this conflict they were engaged in armed conflicts also in south India, known as the First Carnatic war. The French had their principal factory at Pondichery, on the Coromondal coast, with subordinate factories at Masulipatam, Karikal, Mahe, Chandernagar (Bengal) and some other places. The English, on the other hand, had their headquarters at Madras, with important factories at Bombay and Calcutta. In course of the war Dupleix, the French Governor-General, captured Madras in 1746. The English attempt to recover it and to seize Pondichery, in 1748, was not successful. The war showed the clear superiority of the French

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

in the Deccan. It was brought to a close, however, by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) whereby the European war was ended. According to the terms of this treaty Madras was handed back to the English, much to the disgust of Dupleix.

Fortunately for 'Alīvardī Khān this first phase of the Anglo-French conflict was not extended to Bengal, mainly because the political weakness of this eastern province of the Mughal dominion had not yet become apparent enough and, for this and other reasons the two European nations had their eyes fixed principally upon the Deccan and south India generally. 'Alīvardī Khān, on his part, also took care to ensure neutrality within his dominions, asking the two nations not to carry on hostilities against each other, and fixing Point Palmyras on the Orissa coast (Cuttack district) as the point from where neutrality should start.<sup>1</sup> In general the two nations remained at peace with each other in Bengal and this enabled 'Alīvardī Khān to devote his attention to the task of consolidating his own position. Naturally he was eager to promote trade within his dominions and therefore treated the European traders with justice and fairness. On the question of customs to be paid by them, however, he appears to have been guided more by a consciousness of his position as a virtually independent ruler than by the privileges previously obtained by them from the Mughal emperors. He was zealous of his authority and "especially affected a great independence", writes the French agent M. Jean Law, "whenever there was question of any affair between himself and the Europeans. To speak to him of *farmans* or privileges obtained from the emperor was only to anger him. He knew well how to say at the proper moment that he was both king and Wazir."<sup>2</sup> This attitude probably explains his occasional demands of money from the European traders more or less by way of regular customs for their rather extensive trade. The repeated Maratha invasions and the consequential financial strains on him also led to his demanding

<sup>1</sup> See *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XXVI (Atlas), Plate 31,c4 for location of Point Palmyras. 'Alīvardī Khān fixed this mid-point of the Orissa coast as the starting point of neutrality obviously because the province had not yet been brought under his control. It was then being held by Sarfarāz Khān's adherents.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoir of M. Jean Law*, Hill, III, 163-164.

contributions at times from the European traders, as from the local zamindars.

Although the English and the French abided by the terms of neutrality imposed by 'Alivardī Khān in Bengal during the First Carnatic War, they took advantage of his preoccupations with the Mīr-Habīb-Maratha invasions to considerably extend their illicit trade operations. The English also took steps to strengthen their military position by extending their fortifications at Calcutta. As mentioned already, in 1743 when 'Alivardī Khān was faced with a dual Maratha invasion (led by Raghuji Bhonsle on the one hand and Peshwa Bālaji Rāo on the other) the English had the Maratha Ditch dug around their fort in Calcutta. In the later part of 1744 'Alivardī Khān, being relatively free from the Maratha pressure, turned his attention to the European traders and demanded the sums due from them on account of their trade. He also accused the English at that time of having assisted the Marathas. No further particulars of this allegation are available, but 'Alivardī Khān was evidently much irritated against the English. His Afghan general Mustafā Khān, supported by the former's nephews, even suggested the expulsion of the English from Bengal.<sup>1</sup> 'Alivardī Khān had already too much troubles at hand to entertain such proposals. He had also some misgivings about Mustafā Khān's intentions. Alivardi Khān is said to have addressed his nephews as follows:<sup>2</sup>

"My dear children, Mustafā khan is a soldier of fortune, and a man in monthly pay, who lives by his sabre; of course he wishes that I should always have occasion to employ him, and to put it in his power to ask favour for himself and friends; but in the name of common sense, what is the matter with your own selves, that you should join issue with him, and make common cause of his opinion? What wrong have the English done me, that I should wish them ill? Look at yonder plain covered with grass; should you set fire to it, there would be no stopping its progress; and who is the man then who shall put out a fire that shall break forth at sea, and from thence come out upon land? Beware of lending an ear to such proposals again; for they will produce nothing but evil."

Thus 'Alivardī Khān, though irritated against them, was well aware of the consequences of a conflict with the English in view of their sea power. The differences were settled, however, by

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II, 163. The *Siyar* does not mention the date of the incident; but as Mustafā Khān revolted and left 'Alivardī Khān's service in 1745, it must have been sometime in 1744.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-164.

negotiations carried on by the English through the Jagat Śeth, the Rāi Rāiyān Chīn Rāi and 'Alivardī Khān's second nephew Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān. The English records say that they then paid an amount of three and a half lakhs of rupees to the Nawwāb in settlement of his claims, and the French and the Dutch also paid "their share" of the demand.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the close of the First Carnatic War there was another occasion which strained the Nawwāb's relation with the English. In 1748 they arbitrarily captured some Armenian vessels. Thereupon 'Alivardī Khān sent a strongly worded *parwāna* asking the English to restore the vessels and to make good the losses suffered by the Armenians. He also followed up the *parwāna* by sending troops against the various English factories. In view of this strong attitude of the Nawwāb the English were obliged to satisfy the Armenian merchants.

From 1749 to 1755 the English and the French had been engaged in fightings in the Deccan although they continued to be at peace in Europe. This second Carnatic War was clearly the result of their political ambition in the subcontinent. The chief manoeuvre of both of them during this phase of their conflict was to gain control of the Carnatic and Hyderabad by placing their own nominees on the thrones of those territories. For a time Dupleix maintained the French superiority and succeeded in placing his nominees, Muẓaffar Jang and Chandā Śāhib, respectively on the thrones of Hyderabad and the Carnatic. The French influence in the Deccan was now very strong. The position of the English was, however, improved considerably in 1751 by Robert Clive's surprise attack upon and capture of Arcot, capital of the Carnatic. A further advance was made in the following year when Stinger Lawrence seized Trichinopoly. These discomfitures discredited Dupleix with his home authorities who recalled him in 1754. Godhew, the new French Governor-General, brought the hostilities to a close by a treaty of peace with the English in 1755. Thus the Second Carnatic War ended with definite signs of recovery by the English. The French position, however, remained

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Court, 8 November, 1744.

strong in the Northern Circars and Hyderabad.

'Alivardī Khān viewed with "indignation and surprise," we are told, "the progress of the French and the English nations on the Coromondal coast as well as in the Deccan, for by means of his spies he was informed of everything that happened there... He feared that sooner or later the Europeans would attempt similar enterprises in his government."<sup>1</sup> His fears were justified; for prompted by their experience in the Second Carnatic War, and in view of the superior position of the French in south India, the English decided to employ the same tactics in Bengal and to forestall the French there by placing on its throne a nominee of their own. For this purpose they took steps, during the period of their recovery in the Deccan at the closing stage of the Second Carnatic War, to extend their fortifications at Calcutta. It has often been suggested that these fortifications were made as a defensive measure against "the French peril;" but this is not quite correct, for the Anglo-French conflict in the subcontinent had till that time been confined to the Deccan alone and there was no likelihood of its immediate extension to Bengal. The two nations were also at peace in Europe. As will be seen later on, even when subsequently the threat of a fresh war with the French arose, the English factors were of opinion that the Deccan would be the arena of the conflict.<sup>2</sup> It is further to be noted that the news of the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in Europe (1756-1763), in which once again the two nations took opposite sides, did not reach Bengal before February 1757. At least three years prior to that the fortification work at Calcutta had been undertaken. The object was not to withstand a probable French offensive, but, as the English themselves recorded it, to bring about a "revolution" in their favour. If the French figured at all in this fortification project, it was that, from the position of strength which could thus be secured, it would be easy to launch an offensive against them if the need for it arose. The English fortification work at Calcutta, far from being a defensive measure against an apprehended French attack, was the very antithesis of it—a

<sup>1</sup> Memoir of Jean Law, Hill, III, 162-163.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, pp. 665-666.



preparation for a military and political adventure.

The action of the English was, however, wise and timely on their part; for the Nawwāb, 'Alīvardī Khān, was at that time far advanced in age and was not expected to live much longer. There were also visible signs of dissension among the members of his family indicating the probability of a war of succession after his death. The English could also now count upon the support and cooperation of the wealthy and shrewd mercantile class represented by the *Śeths* and the *Bāniās* - a factor which did not exist in south India. The rise of this class of people was due mainly to a century of commercial activities of the European companies in Bengal. During that period a number of Hindu families had grown rich and influential by acting as agents of the European companies and otherwise by having recourse to trade and commerce. Some of them had risen to power and eminence as bankers and revenue administrators. Soon they emerged as an important factor in the country's politics. Thus, as mentioned earlier, on the eve of Murshid Qulī Khān's death they opposed the succession of his nominee and grandson, Sarfarāz Khān, whom they considered unfavourable to their interests. Instead, they successfully espoused the cause of the latter's father, Shujā' al-Dīn Khān. During his rule the *Śeths* and the *Bāniās* naturally became the leading faction at the court and their leaders, 'Ālam Chānd and the Jagat Śeth, became the virtual rulers of the country. On Shujā' al-Dīn Khān's death this faction assisted 'Alīvardī Khān to occupy the *masnad* of Bengal and, towards the end of his rule, he depended more and more upon them. The position and influence which they now had would naturally lead them on to further political ambitions, because, as Brijen K. Gupta points out, there was a "revival of Hindu feeling" throughout India<sup>1</sup> coinciding with the disintegration of the Mughal empire and the rise of the Marathas and the Sikhs. There are indications that the affluent and mercantile Hindu community in Bengal were not totally immune from that spirit. Unlike the Marathas and the Sikhs, however, they did not possess the martial quality directly to assume political power in the province. Naturally therefore

<sup>1</sup> Brijen K. Gupta, *Sirajuddaulah and the East India Company, 1756-1757*, Leiden, 1962, p. 30.

they thought of some indirect method of aggrandizing themselves in the country's politics. Fortunately for them, it was about the same time that the English in Bengal had adopted a forward policy, combining their commercial speculations with political ambitions. A number of factors facilitated an understanding between them and the Hindu group. The English had been carrying on their trading activities in Bengal almost exclusively with the help of these Hindu agents and contractors.<sup>1</sup> A century of such cooperation had not only helped the growth of this mercantile class but had also created a community of interest between the two. They were the natural allies of each other and, in the event of any conflict of either of them with a third party, such as the Nawwāb, both of them were likely to join hands as allies. Moreover, the *Śeth-Bāniā* group realized full well that the establishment of the English East India Company's political power in Bengal and, in consequence, an enlargement of its commercial activities, would be conducive to their own material interests. They could also visualize that the Company's commercial interests as well their need for local support would make them more dependent upon the cooperation of the *Bāniā* faction than would ever be the case with a Muslim Nawwāb. Thus for political and commercial ends the *Śeths* and the *Bāniās* were ready for an alliance with the English.

It was the advantage of such an alliance with the Hindu group and the probability of capturing political power in Bengal with their assistance which the English had in view when they decided in 1754 to extend their fortifications at Calcutta. Charles F. Noble, secretary to Colonel Scott, who had drawn up the fortification project, informs us as follows:

"Colonel Scott understood that on the death of the old Nabob there would be dispute for the Crown between the gentlemen, his nephews and his grandsons, who had already discovered ambitious views.... Colonel

<sup>1</sup> During the years 1736-40 the East India Company had carried on their investments at Calcutta with 52 local merchants, all of whom were Hindus. So were also the 25 merchants with whom the Company were associated at Kasimbazar at that time. It was only at Dacca that out of 12 such merchants only 2 appear to have been Muslims—*Beng. Pub. Cons.*, 6 July 1736 and 15 December 1740; Kasimbazar Factory Records, Vol.IV., 31 January 1739, and Dacca Factory Records, Vol.II., 12 April, 1739, all quoted in A.R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal*, Dacca, 1961, p.62.

Scott observed in Bengal the Jentue rajahs [Hindu Rājās] and inhabitants were very much disaffected to the Moor [Muslim] Government, and secretly wished for a change and opportunity of throwing off their tyrannical yoke. And was of opinion that if an European force began successfully, that they would be inclined to join them if properly applied to and encouraged, but might be cautious how they acted at first until they had a probability of success in bringing about a Revolution to their advantage.

I look on Omy Chand [Umichānd] as the man in Bengal the most capable of serving us if he has a mind to it.... There is a man named Nimo Gosseyng [Nimu Gosāin] the High Priest of the Gentues, who has a great influence among the Jentue rajahs and with a particular caste of people who go up and down the kindgom well armed in great bodies, of the facquir or religious beggar cast [sic], who might possibly be of service to us if they could be engaged to our interest, which by Nimo Gosseyng's means I have particular reasons to believe might be done.

This priest gave Colonel Scott very good information and advice relating to the affairs of that country and told him he could bring 1,000 of these men to assist the English in four days warning when needful. The Colonel did him some service while he lived and I dare say he has a respect for his memory to this day.

At least three things are clear from the above account. First, the decision to extend the fortifications at Calcutta and thereby to strengthen the military position of the English was taken in view of 'Alīvardī Khān's old age and the dispute that seemed imminent over the question of succession to the throne. Secondly, it was felt that the Hindu Rājās and inhabitants, by whom the group led by the Jagat Śeth and the Burdwan Raja were obviously meant, were dissatisfied with the government and that with their help the English could capture power in Bengal. Thirdly, Colonel Scott had already been in touch with some of them, particularly Nimu Gosain, a Hindu priest, and probably also with Umichānd. The Colonel had rendered Nimu Gosain "some service" for which the latter had even indicated his willingness to help the English with 1,000 armed men when needed. The alleged "French peril" which was subsequently adduced in justification for the fortification work at Calcutta was not at all a consideration when it was in fact undertaken in 1754. Even the Court of Directors in London were informed that the extension of the fortification at Calcutta was

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter of Charles, F. Noble to the Select Committee, Fort St. George, 22 September 1756, Hill.III, London, 1905, pp.326-328.

intended to secure the settlement "from any attacks from the Country Forces."<sup>1</sup> The Court, on their part, instructed their agents to proceed with the work with the consent, or at least the connivance of the Nawwāb, for obtaining which they also sanctioned a sum of 200,000 rupees.<sup>2</sup>

The English factors in Bengal, however, proceeded with the work of fortification without even informing the Nawwāb about it. They assured themselves that 'Alivardī Khān would not "take any notice of our making Calcutta defensible."<sup>3</sup> William Watts, chief of the Kasimbazar factory and the Fort William Council's representative to deal with the Nawwāb's court, argued that "a previous application to the Nabob for Leave to fortify Calcutta" would be a step "highly Improper for us to take. For in case the Nabob should absolutely refuse us his Permission We must at Once give over All Thoughts of Fortifying or do so in Defiance of Him."<sup>4</sup> The Court of Directors were not clearly informed, however, that the Nawwāb's leave had not been obtained, but were given the evasive reply that "due regard" would be paid to their instructions.<sup>5</sup> In the same communication to the Court, made on 28 September 1755, the Bengal factors reiterated that the fortification work had been undertaken "for the defence of the place against a Country Enemy."<sup>6</sup> It may be noted that by their plea of defence against a "country enemy" the Fort William Council meant that they apprehended an attack on their settlement by "one or the other of the competitors" for the throne.<sup>7</sup> This, however, further reveals their political motives; for on no previous occasion was there any assault upon foreign factories in Bengal by any rival claimant to the throne. The factors' plea can therefore be explained only by the fact that they were intending to take sides in the impending dispute. Be that as it may, within a few

<sup>1</sup> Court of Directors to the Fort William Council, 24 November, 1754, Wilson, *The Indian Records: Old Fort William in Bengal*, Vol. II., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>3</sup> Watts to Fort William Council, 15 August 1755, Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Fort William Council to Court of Directors, 28 September, 1755, *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Charles F. Noble's letter to the Select Committee, Fort St. George, 22 Sept. 1756, Hill, III, 326.

months substantial progress was made in the work and the Fort William Council were able to inform their masters on 21 February 1756 that the redoubt at "Perrin's Corner" had been nearly completed.<sup>1</sup>

Along with this secret preparation for resisting what they called the "country enemy" the Fort William Council also practically assumed sovereign rights over their zamindari possession around Calcutta.<sup>2</sup> As an instance as well as a consequence of this step they began to give protection in their settlement to fugitives from the Nawwāb's justice or even to his known enemies, all of whom were, significantly enough, Hindus. Thus in 1751 the Council gave shelter to one Rāmkrishna Śeth, a merchant in Calcutta, who was accused of smuggling. The Fort William Council defied the Nawwāb's orders for surrendering him. Similarly in 1755 and 1756, they resisted the Nawwāb's legal claims to the properties of Lacchi, Rādhānāth, Gosāin Sen and Sacher, all of whom died intestate and without any successor.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously with such intransigent attitude the Calcutta Council also began grossly to abuse their trade privileges. Specially they carried on an extensive illicit trade in *dastakhs* or trade permits granted exclusively for the Company; selling these to private merchants, whereby the Nawwāb's exchequer was deprived of a large amount of revenue.

Nawwāb 'Alīvardī Khān was not unaware of the political ambitions of the English. He had also come to know about their fortification work at Calcutta. Due to extreme illness and also due to the successive afflictions caused by the death of Ikrām al-Daulah, Nawāzish Muḥammad Khān and Sa'īd Aḥmad Khān

<sup>1</sup> Fort William Council to Court of Directors, 21 February 1756, Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.44.

<sup>2</sup> As narrated earlier, in 1698 the English East India Company obtained zamindari rights over the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindapur on an yearly rental of Rs. 1,195 only. Although Nawwāb Murshid Qulī Khān did not allow further extension of their zamindari, the Company surreptitiously purchased a large number of villages in the names of their Hindu employees. The Nawwāb, not quite unaware of this, demanded an enhancement of the rental commensurate with the actual revenue realized from the villages thus secured. The English, much against their wish, had to compose the matter by paying the Nawwāb the sums of Rs. 20,000, Rs. 55,000 and Rs. 85,000 respectively in 1726, 1736 and 1754. The actual revenue collected by the Company from the villages stood at 11,071 in 1717. It rose to Rs. 107,131 in 1754. (See W.W. Hunter, *A statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol.I, p.20; also Gupta, *op.cit.*, 9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Gupta, *op.cit.*, 38-39.

which took place about that time, he could not take any effective step against them. His heir-apparent, Sirāj al-Daulah, was, however, determined to assert the Nawwāb's authority and to frustrate the designs of the English. This attitude naturally made him unpopular with the English who were now all the more bent upon preventing his succession to the throne and placing upon it a nominee of their own. Thus even before 'Alivardī Khān's death they began to align themselves with the rival claimants to the Nawwābship, particularly with Ghaseṭi Begam, who had the support of the influential Rājā Rāj Ballabh, the revenue administrator at Dacca. M. Jean Law, the chief of the French factory at Kasimbazar, writes about the activities of the English as follows:<sup>1</sup>

"During the last illness of Alivardikhan, there were two considerable parties which pretended to the subahdari, and which, though divided, appeared likely to unite in order to overthrow that of Sirajuddaulah. The one was the party of the widow of Nawajis Muhammad, whose plan was to get recognised as Subahdar the bastard child of Badshah Kuli the brother of Sirajuddaulah, whom she had under her charge. The other was that of Shaukat Jang, Nawab of Purneah, a Prince held in much esteem. These parties necessarily caused much confusion. It was in the effervescence of these troubles that the English gave Sirajuddaulah reason for complaint against them. Always led by the idea that he would not have sufficient influence to get himself recognized as Subahdar they carried on a correspondence with the Begum whom I have just mentioned, and withdrew to Calcutta the treasures which she wished to put in a place of safety and also those of Raj Balav her chief diwan. It is even said that they had an understanding with the Nawab of Purneah.

Jean Law further informs us that Sirāj al-Daulah, on coming to know about the intrigues of the English, summoned to the *darbār* (court) the representatives of the Dutch, the English and the French and after three days of interrogations asked them "to warn their masters to have no communication with the Begum or her adherents."<sup>2</sup>

The English, of course, did not desist from their designs, and their determination to go forward with their decision to intervene in the dispute for succession gave rise to the episode of Krishna Ballabh alias Krishna Dās, son of Rāj Ballabh. The latter, as revenue administrator of Dacca, was suspected of embezzlement

<sup>1</sup> Extract Memoir of M. Jean Law, Hill, III., 163-164.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

and, as an English factor writes, there were "great reasons to apprehend" that both father and son "had been guilty of many frauds" and of having "amassed immense treasures by oppression and other unjust ways".<sup>1</sup> Sirāj al-Daulah, acting on behalf of the ailing Nawwāb 'Alīvardī Khān, demanded an account from Rāj Ballabh and wanted to know "what was become of the King's revenues collected for some years past."<sup>2</sup> Immediately Rāj Ballabh sought and obtained shelter for his family, together with a treasure estimated at 53,00,000 rupees, in the English settlement at Calcutta. The unhesitating grant of shelter to the fugitives and at that time the known enemies of Sirāj al-Daulah was clearly a hostile act on the part of the English and a proof of their complicity with the Begam. They did it with a full knowledge of its implications and with a conviction in her ultimate success and the immense influence which Rāj Ballabh had on her. When pressed on by Sirāj al-Daulah for the accounts Rāj Ballabh evaded rendering them on the plea "that his son was fled and taken protection with the English with everything appertaining to him, which rendered it impossible for him to comply with his [Sirāj al-Daulah's] demands."<sup>3</sup>

Matters stood at that stage when, on April 10, 1756, 'Alīvardī Khān died and was succeeded by Sirāj al-Daulah.

<sup>1</sup> Narrative of the capture of Calcutta from 10 April to 10 November 1756, by William Tooke, Hill, I., 278-279.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>3</sup> See Holwell's letter to the Court of Directors, 30 November 1756, *B.M.P.*, II; also Holwell's letter to the Court, 10 August 1757, Hill, III, 348-349.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### SIRĀJ AL-DAULAH AND THE END OF MUSLIM RULE IN BENGAL

#### I: CONFLICT WITH THE ENGLISH

On 'Alivardī Khān's death Sirāj al-Daulah succeeded to the *masnad* of Bengal apparently without any opposition; but the conspiracy against him was already in progress. Ghaseṭī Begam, as noted above, had won over to her side a number of generals and their troops by a liberal distribution of her wealth. On the eve of Sirāj's accession she was entrenched in her Motijhil palace near Murshidabad and was contemplating to make a sudden attack upon him. Sirāj al-Daulah however acted promptly. He sent a strong force to the Motijhil palace and secured her person and treasures without much opposition. The commanders and troops who had "received so much golds and so many presents from her" did not find "in themselves any stomach for fighting at all" and deserted her.<sup>1</sup> Even her favourite Mīr Nāẓar 'Alī did not stand by her side in the hour of need and "found means to procure his escape" by giving large presents to two "commanders of character", Dost Muḥammad Khān and Raḥīm Khān and thus inducing them to intercede in his favour with Sirāj.<sup>2</sup> Ghaseṭī Begam was kept confined in the Murshidabad palace and her treasures were sent to the public treasury. With equal promptness Sirāj al-Daulah next marched against Shawkat Jang of Purnia who was meditating a revolt. The sudden arrival of Sirāj al-Daulah and his forces near Purnia threw Shawkat Jang as well as his favourites and ministers into dismay and they made a submission.

Thus having dealt with his immediate rivals Sirāj al-Daulah turned his attention to the English. The latter, on his accession, had not even paid him the customary visits and presents. William Tooke, one of the English factors of the time writes:<sup>3</sup>

"I have already observed by which means Seir Raja Doulet [Sirāj

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II, 185-186.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 186. Mīr Nāẓar 'Alī is stated to have run away with "twelve or fifteen lacs in jewels, and God knows how much more in cash". He returned to Bengal in 1780, "poor and distressed", as the translator of the *Siyar* puts it from his personal knowledge. *Ibid.*, note (96).

<sup>3</sup> Hill, Vol. I., p. 278.



al-Daulah] came to the Nabobship, upon which occasion it is usual according to an old Eastern custom on being appointed Prince of the country to be visited by the different foreign nations and proper presents made him. This in the first place we neglected doing, and gave him no small vexation..."

The grant of protection to Krishna Dās by the English was also an act of political defiance and a mark of their intrigue with Sirāj's enemies. He was quite aware of this. Yet, to begin with, he did not think in terms of adopting the same strong measures against them as he had done with regard to Ghaseti Begam and Shawkat Jang. Instead, he proceeded by way of negotiations. He repeatedly asked the Fort William Council to surrender Krishna Dās and to dismantle the fortifications they had unauthorizedly erected. To these overtures Roger Drake, the governor of the Fort William Council, made arrogant replies. Their pretexts, as Tooke notes, were as follows:<sup>1</sup>

"they had promised Kissendas protection, and protect him they would let what would be the consequences of it, under pretence that it would be a reflection to the nations to deliver up a man to the hands of his enemy that had once taken protection of the English flag,... that the Nabob knowing he (Krishna Dās) was extremely rich only wanted to plunder him, besides (this) might be a precedent that might prove hereafter very prejudicial to the Company as the Nabob by the same rules might send for any other person whenever he pleased."

The English thus advanced three main excuses. First, that Krishna Dās had taken protection of the English flag; it would therefore lower the prestige of the English before all other nations if he were surrendered to his enemy. Secondly, that Sirāj al-Daulah wanted to plunder the treasures of Krishna Dās, who was "extremely rich." Thirdly, that to surrender him would create a precedent whereby the Nawwāb would be able to demand the surrender of any man "whenever he pleased." Obviously, these excuses are either supercilious in nature or altogether baseless. The English factors were residing within the Nawwāb's dominion and were not in the position of a recognized government. They were not therefore entitled to offer protection of their national flag to local people, even if the latter were political offenders. In Krishna Dās's case he was clearly a fugitive

<sup>1</sup> Hill, Vol. I, p. 278.

from justice. The contention that the Nawwāb wanted to plunder his riches is utterly false; for, even according to the evidence of William Tooke, Rāj Ballabh had "amassed immense treasures by oppression and other unjust ways" and had sent his son Krishna Dās with these ill-gotten treasures and the revenues of the eastern districts to take shelter in Calcutta. The third pretext is also equally fallacious. In fact, the pretensions of the Fort William Council in this respect can be explained only with reference to their policy of becoming the determinant political power in Bengal. William Tooke further notes that all the time this correspondence about Krishna Dās had been going on, the Secret Committee of the Fort William Council had been "extremely busy in taking measures to frustrate the Nabob's schemes," and that they also felt sure that Sirāj al-Daulah "might get routed by the Purnea Nabob." However, as Tooke notes,

"all their sanguine hopes miscarried, for Seir Raja Doulet [Sirāj al-Daulah] soon reduced Sucajunk [Shawkat Jang] to subjection and marched back towards Muxadevad with great haste, where he arrived at the middle of May."<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the Fort William Council was thus like that of a rival government and not that of a company of merchants trading in a foreign country. As a last attempt to persuade the English to come to an amicable settlement Sirāj al-Daulah sent to them Khwāja Wājīd, an influential merchant of Hugli, who had been on good terms with them. He went to Calcutta as many as four times, but on each occasion he was dishonourably dismissed and was finally "threatened to be ill-used if he came again on the same errand."<sup>2</sup> It may be mentioned here that it was in course of these overtures of the Nawwāb that the Fort William Council raised for the first time the plea of probability of war with the French as a reason for their fortification work at Calcutta.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> William Watts and Matthew Collet to Fort St., George Council, 7 and 16 July 1756; Hill, Vol.I., pp.58 and 108. Richard Beecher, writing to the Fort William Council after Sirāj al-Daulah's capture of Calcutta stated: "I am still of opinion that the protection given to Kissendas and the insult to the Nabob's messenger were essential causes of our late misfortunes..."-*Ibid.*, Vol.II., p.157.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.II., p.147. After the outbreak of the Seven Years' War and the consequent commencement of hostilities with the French the same postorous explanation was forwarded to the Court of Directors presumably in order to palliate the latter's earlier dislike to extend the Calcutta fortification without the Nawwāb's consent.

However, when all attempts at peaceful settlement failed Sirāj al-Daulah decided to apply force. In a letter written to Khwajā Wājīd on 1 June 1756 the Nawwāb gave the following reasons for his decision:<sup>1</sup>

"I have three substantial motives in extirpating the English out of my country, one that they have built strong fortifications and dug a large ditch in the King's dominions contrary to the established laws of the country. The second is that they have abused the privilege of their dustucks by granting them to such as were no ways entitled to them, from which practices the King has suffered greatly in the revenue of his customs; The third motive is that they give protection to such of the King's subjects as have by their behaviour in the employs they were entrusted with made themselves to be called to an account and instead of giving them up on demand they allow such persons to shelter themselves within their bounds from the hands of justice. For these reasons it is become requisite to drive them out."

Two days afterwards, on 3 June, Sirāj al-Daulah invested the Kasimbazar factory and captured it. His intention was not to plunder the factory, as Hill would have us believe,<sup>2</sup> but to put pressure on the Fort William Council to come to terms. This is clear from the testimony of William Watts and Matthew Collet who were in charge of the Kasimbazar factory. Writing to their superiors about Sirāj al-Daulah's action they stated that the Nawwāb put the factory and warehouses at Kasimbazar under lock and key in order to prevent their plunder by the soldiers. They further stated that he "touched none of the Company's effects at Cassimbazar except the warlike stores."<sup>3</sup> The Nawwāb only made Watts sign a capitulation whereby he undertook, in essence, that the English would desist from the three kinds of irregular activities mentioned above.<sup>4</sup> The Nawwāb also set at liberty all the Englishmen at Kasimbazar except Watts and Collet whom he took along with him in his march to Calcutta. While marching towards Calcutta he also sent several letters calling upon the Fort William Council to come to a peaceful settlement.<sup>5</sup>

The Fort William Council were not, however, in a mood to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. liii ff.

<sup>3</sup> Watts and Collet to Council at Falta, 8 July 1756, *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Hill, Vol. I, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 142 and 254.

pay any heed to Sirāj's overtures. They had extended their fortifications and had given shelter to Krishna Das along with the revenues of Dacca and the treasures of Ghaseti Begam as part of their calculated moves for intervening in the dispute over the succession to the Nawwābship and thereby establishing their political supremacy over Bengal. They were now also emboldened by the prospect of getting military reinforcements from south India, for the English forces who had been concentrated there in connection with the first and the second Carnatic wars had now no wars to fight there and could be called to Bengal for help. Thus on 4 June (1756), three days before the news of the capture of Kasimbazar reached Calcutta, the Fort William Council sent urgent requests to Fort St. George for immediate military reinforcements;<sup>1</sup> and on 10 June, a clear week before the Nawwāb's arrival at Calcutta, Drake commenced hostilities by sending two detachments to capture Thana fort, situated at the narrowest point down the Hugli river, and Sukhsāgar, a strategic place halfway between Calcutta and Hugli. An advanced guard of the Nawwāb's forces, however, repelled the English attack on both the places.

Sirāj al-Daulah arrived before the gate of the Fort William on 16 June with a force of 30000 troops. Even at that time Drake thought that the Nawwāb would retreat if the English gave a determined fight.<sup>2</sup> After two days of fighting, however, Drake found it impossible to oppose the Nawwāb's forces and, on 19 June, escaped with the main body of the English residents of the Fort to Falta, a few miles down the stream. Holwell, with a few other Englishmen, were left in the Fort (presumably in order to put up a show of fight and thus provide cover for Drake's escape), with instructions to follow suit on the following day. Before that could be done the Nawwāb's forces captured the Fort at midday on the 20th when Holwell and his companions had to surrender. According to their records, no violence was done to the persons of the Englishmen after their surrender.<sup>3</sup> It was only at night that

<sup>1</sup> Fort St. George Council Consultations, 1756, Vol. LXXXVI, pp.1-3, cited in Gupta, *op.cit.*, p.59.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Grant, "An account of the capture of Calcutta", Hill, Vol.I., p.76.

<sup>3</sup> Tooke's evidence before the Comm. of the House of Commons, *ibid.*, Vol.III, p.301.

some Englishmen, who had drunk hard and had become riotous, had been confined in a room measuring 18' × 14' which the factors themselves had constructed for putting disorderly elements under restraint. The number of the confined persons was not less than forty but did not exceed sixty. Of them some twenty persons died at night mainly on account of exhaustion and fatigue due to the preceding four days of hard fighting. This incident was subsequently exaggerated by Holwell into the so-called "Black Hole Tragedy". Holwell put the number of internees and survivors respectively as 146 and 26 and ascribed the death of so many Englishmen to mere congestion and heat.<sup>1</sup> It is now generally agreed by scholars that Holwell's account is highly distorted and exaggerated.<sup>2</sup> On the following day, however, Sirāj al-Daulah released all the Englishmen who had been found within the fort except Holwell and three others whom he ordered to be taken to the capital, Murshidabad. On 24 June Sirāj left for the capital leaving Mānik Chānd in charge of the administration of Calcutta. By 26 June all the Englishmen made their way to Falta.

On his return to the capital Sirāj al-Daulah addressed a letter, on 30 June (1756), to George Pigot, Governor of the Fort St. George. This letter shows that the Nawwāb was willing to allow the English to stay and trade in Bengal on just and reasonable terms. In fact, his taking of Holwell and three other Englishmen to Murshidabad indicated that he wanted to negotiate matters with the Company's authorities. The Nawwāb wrote:<sup>3</sup>

"It was not my intention to remove the mercantile business of the Company belonging to you out of the *subah* of Bengal, but Roger Drake your *gomastah* was a very wicked and unruly man and began to give protection to persons who had accounts with the *Patcha* [Bādshāh] in his *koaty* [*kuthi* or factory]. Notwithstanding all my admonitions, yet he did

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.131 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Gupta, *op.cit.*, pp.70-80; see also T.G.P. Spear's "Note on the Black Hole" in *Oxford History of India*, third edition, p.479. Spear writes: "We owe the traditional story of the Black Hole to the descriptive powers of V.Z. Holwell, the defender of Calcutta and a plausible and none too reliable man. For fifty years little notice was taken of the incident, but it then became convenient material for the compilers of an imperialist hagiology....For many years it has now been agreed that the incident was not due to the deliberate action of Siraj-ud-daulah, and that on the part of his agents it was the result of ignorance and carelessness rather than of cruelty and vindictiveness."

<sup>3</sup> Hill, Vol.I., p.196.

not desist from his shameless actions. Why should these people who come to transact mercantile affairs of the Company be doers of such actions? However, that shameless man has met with the desert of his actions and was expelled from this *subah*. I gave leave to Mr. Watts who is a helpless, poor, and innocent man to go to you. As I esteemed you to be a substantial person belonging to the Company, I have wrote these circumstances of his shameless and wicked proceedings."

Sirāj al-Daulah was thus consistent in his attitude. He had no objection to the Company's trading in Bengal; he only wanted that they should not indulge in political intrigues nor abuse their trade privileges. His capture of the Kasimbazar factory and the Fort William had been necessitated by the intransigence of the Fort William Council in enlarging their fortifications in defiance of the Nawwāb's prohibitions, in giving shelter to the fugitives from justice and in abusing their trade privileges. He was particularly annoyed with Roger Drake's arrogance. Sirāj al-Daulah's willingness to allow the English to resettle in Bengal under a more sensible and amiable leader, and on just terms, is implicit throughout the above noted letter. In exhibiting such accommodativeness however he seemsto have viewed the English factors essentially as commercial agents and to have underestimated their political ambitions which had assumed a new dimension on account of the Carnatic wars and the presence of a substantial body of English troops in the Deccan.

## II. THE ENGLISH AT FALTA

True to their political motives Roger Drake and his colleagues at Falta were thinking only in terms of reestablishing themselves by force. They awaited the arrival of reinforcements from Madras for which they had already sent requests. To gain time, however, they opened negotiations, on 6 July, with the Nawwāb's principal nobles professing an intention for a peaceful settlement.<sup>1</sup> That they did not really mean a peaceful settlement is evident from their letter, written a week later, to the Fort St. George Council. In it they explained that they had been trying to gain time by professing a desire for a peaceful settlement; and once again entreated the Madras authorities for sending immedi-

<sup>1</sup> Falta Council's letters to Khwāja Wājīd, Watts and Collet, 6 July 1756, Hill, Vol.I., pp.57-58, 59.

ate reinforcements.<sup>1</sup>

While the English at Falta were thinking in terms of a trial of strength and were awaiting the arrival of reinforcements from Madras, a number of the local notables and merchants, including even Sirāj al-Daulah's governor of Calcutta, assisted and encouraged them in all possible ways. Thus one Śrī Bābu alias Śiva Bābu, Khwāja Wājīd's chief assistant, especially fanned Drake's apprehensions by telling him that the Nawwāb would not allow the English their former privileges and that after the humiliating defeat at Calcutta peace with honour was almost impossible. Śiva Bābu suggested that "the only method to reestablish Calcutta upon creditable terms would be to proceed to Madras and there concert measures with the Governor and Council, and to return with strength..."<sup>2</sup> Another person, Govinda Rām Mitra, who had earlier tried to help the English by impeding the Nawwāb's march through Calcutta by "felling down trees and cutting through the roads,"<sup>3</sup> now engaged himself in spying for the English.<sup>4</sup> With the assistance of Govinda Rām Mitra and his sort Watts and Collet, who had been staying at Chandernagar, and Warren Hastings, who had been staying at Kasimbazar, established contact with the malcontents at the Nawwāb's court and collected information about his army and other affairs. Mānik Chānd, on his part, facilitated the stay of the English at Falta by making provisions and other necessaries available to them and also by sending rather misleading reports to the Nawwāb that the English at Falta intended a peaceful settlement.

The Fort William Council's requests for military reinforcements and the news of the surrender of Kasimbazar reached Madras by the middle of July. Immediately the Fort St. George Council resolved to send 200 men under Major Kilpatrick.<sup>5</sup> The latter sailed from Madras on 20 July by the *Delaware* and arrived at Falta on 31 July only to find that the English had also been ousted from Fort William. As the rainy season had set in and as

<sup>1</sup> Falta Council to Fort St. George Council, 13th July, 1756 *Ibid.*, pp.71-72.

<sup>2</sup> Watts and Collet to Court of Directors, 17 July 1756, *Ibid.*, pp.71-72.

<sup>3</sup> Drake's narrative, *Ibid.*, pp.139-140.

<sup>4</sup> Orme MSS. India V.1169, 1160, quoted in Gopal, Rām, *op.cit.*, p.113.

<sup>5</sup> Hill, Vol.II., p.99.

the available forces were inadequate for recapturing Calcutta, Major Kilpatrick refrained from an immediate commencement of hostilities. Instead, he wrote to the Madras Council on 5 August for "large supplies" of military and marine forces.<sup>1</sup> Lest his arrival with troops should cause any misgivings in the mind of the Nawwāb, and with a view to gaining time, Kilpatrick confirmed and continued the tactics adopted by Drake. Thus, having written to Madras for further reinforcements, Kilpatrick wrote to Sirāj al-Daulah, on 15 August 1756, "assuring him" of the "good intentions" of the English and beseeching his favour.<sup>2</sup> Kilpatrick also wrote to Mānik Chānd, Jagat Śeth and other notables asking for their intercession on behalf of the English.<sup>3</sup> The letter to the Nawwāb was not delivered, but the one to Mānik Chānd elicited "many compliments and the strongest assurance of his assistance." He sent at the same time, as the Falta Select Committee further noted, "a boat with a dastack with orders for opening a bazar in Calcutta and for supplying us with provisions of all kinds."<sup>4</sup> Mānik Chānd also pleaded with the Nawwāb to the effect that the English had no hostile intentions against him.<sup>5</sup>

These professions of peaceful intentions, particularly Mānik Chānd's assurances, doubtless had an effect upon Sirāj al-Daulah; for the latter is reported to have told Mānik Chānd that if the English did not intend a war with the Nawwāb, their requests for resettlement and other trade privileges would be granted.<sup>6</sup> There were also other circumstances which favoured Drake's and Kilpatrick's manœuvre to gain time. The Bengal Nawwāb had no naval force worth the name. Therefore, even if he could expel the foreign traders from their factories and settlements within the land, it was just beyond his power to drive them out of the coastal waters or to pursue them on the high seas. This was an advantage for the English at Falta which they utilized in full. Secondly, Sirāj al-Daulah was also at that very time much preoccupied with

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> Falta Select Committee Consultations, 22 August 1756, quoted in Gupta, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Falta Select Committee Consultations, 5 Sept. 1756, *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Falta Select Committee Consultations, 6 November 1756, *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



Shawkat Jang of Purnia. The latter having been instigated by Mīr Ja'far and some other nobles,<sup>1</sup> and having at that time obtained a *farmān* from the Mughal emperor conferring upon him the *ṣubahdārī* (governorship) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, challenged Sirāj al-Daulah's authority. Naturally enough, the English wished success for Shawkat Jang.<sup>2</sup> To their great disappointment, however, Sirāj al-Daulah succeeded in eliminating Shawkat Jang who was killed in a battle which took place on 6 October 1756.

Meanwhile the news of the fall of Calcutta and Drake's and Kilpatrick's letters for further military reinforcements reached Madras in the middle of August. Already in May the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) had broken out and England and France were engaged in hostilities in Europe; but the news of it had not yet reached India. The Fort St. George council suspected, however, the probability of such a war and were, as such, hesitant about sending away more of their troops to Bengal.<sup>3</sup> They therefore waited for the arrival of ships from England. In September two of the Company's ships, the *Chesterfield* and the *Walpole*, arrived at Madras; but they still did not bring any news of the outbreak of war with France.<sup>4</sup> Presumably they had left Europe before the outbreak of the war. Accordingly, on 13 October, the Fort St. George Council resolved to send an expedition to Bengal under Robert Clive and Admiral Waston. The instructions to Clive and the Bengal Council were as follows:<sup>5</sup>

"The mere retaking of Calcutta should we think by no means be the end of this undertaking; not only their settlements and factories should be restored but all their privileges established in the full granted by the Great Mogul, and ample reparation made to them for the loss they have lately sustained; otherwise we are of opinion it would have been better nothing had been attempted,...

Should the Nabob on the news of the arrival of these forces, make offers tending to the acquiring to the Company the before mentioned advantages, rather than risque the success of a war, we think that sentiments of revenging injuries, although they were never more just, should give place to the necessity of sparing as far as possible the many

<sup>1</sup> *Siyar*, II, 193-197, 198, 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Falta Council to Fort St. George Council*, 17 Sept., 1756, Hill, Vol. I., p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> *General letter from Fort St. George to England*, 13 October, 1756, *B.M.P.* Vol. II.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Fort St. George Council to Fort William Council*, 13 October 1756, Hill, Vol. I., pp. 239-240.

bad consequences of war, besides the expense of the Company's treasures, but we are of opinion that the sword should go hand in hand with the pen, and that on the arrival of the present armament, hostilities should immediately commence with the utmost vigour. These hostilities must be of every kind which can either distress his dominions and estate or bring reprisals into our possession.

We need not represent to you the great advantage which we think it will be to the military operations, and the influence it will have in the Nabob's Councils to effect a junction with any powers in the provinces of Bengal that may be dissatisfied with the violences of the Nabob's Government, or that may have pretensions to the Nabobship.....

But as we have particular dependence on Colonel Clive's ability for the management of this expedition, and as it is absolutely necessary that no division of opinion or other impediment should prevent its being carried into full execution, our instructions to Colonel Clive will empower him to proceed to such military operations by land, as he shall judge to be most for the Company's interest... and should we upon the news of a war with France find it necessary to recall him with a part of the troops, that he do immediately come away with such troops, leaving only as many as shall think fit for the defence of Calcutta; as in that circumstance we think that the preservation of the Company's estate under our authority a concern of more too much importance to be subjected to the risques which may be incurred by the want of those troops...."

Thus the probability of a fresh war with the French acted as deterrent rather than as a stimulant to the sending of an expedition to Bengal. The Fort St. George Council thought that in the event of an outbreak of hostilities with the French the main theatre of the conflict would be the Deccan. In sending the expedition to Bengal their obvious strategy was to outwit the French by establishing the English supremacy there before the commencement of hostilities with that nation and, in the event of the outbreak of such hostilities, to concentrate all available forces in the south to combat the French. Clive was therefore instructed to commence vigorous hostilities immediately on his arrival in Bengal. He was to spare the "many bad consequences of war" only if the Nawwāb, on hearing "the news of the arrival of these forces,"<sup>1</sup> did not "risque the success of a war" and made "offers" to render satisfaction to the English for all their losses and to

<sup>1</sup> The expedition consisted of 5 ships, the *Kent*, the *Cumberland*, the *Tyger*, the *Salisbury*, the *Walpole* and the *Malborough*; and three ketches, the *Lapwing*, the *Snow*, and the *Boneta*. These vessels carried 528 infantrymen, 109 artillerymen, 940 sepoy and 160 laskars, besides military supplies and provisions, and a sum of 400,000 rupees. (*Hill*, I., 233).

re-establish them with "all their privileges.. in the full extent." Even in the course of such negotiations Clive was to see that the sword went "hand in hand with the pen." Clive was further asked to effect a junction with the Nawwāb's enemies and rivals. To facilitate the last mentioned move letters were addressed to the Deputy Nawwābs of Dacca, Purnia and Cuttack asking their assistance. At the Same time the Fort St. George Council sent a reply to Sirāj al-Daulah's letter of 30 June expressing resentments at what they called the "violence and cruelties exercised" upon the English in Bengal and threateningly demanding satisfaction from the Nawwāb. Pigot wrote:<sup>1</sup>

"I have sent a great *Sardar*, who will govern after me, by name Colonel Clive, with troops and land forces. Full satisfaction and restitution must be made for the losses we have sustained... You have heard that we have fought and always been victorious in these parts.."

Obviously the tone of this letter as also the terms of instructions to Clive and the Fort William Council militated against any prospect of a peaceful settlement. The accusation of "violence" and "cruelties" against Sirāj al-Daulah is obviously ill-founded. The Fort William Council had wilfully and designedly provoked him to take action against them. Even among themselves the Fort St. George Council were not quite sure whether Sirāj al-Daulah was really at fault. Thus while communicating their decision about the Bengal expedition to the Court of Directors the Madras Council wrote: "Whether the Nabob had from the beginning determined on the total expulsion of the English, and, if so, what could have given him cause for such a resolution, or whether affairs might not have been accommodated by the way of negotiation and a sum of money, are subjects that we leave to be treated when we are better acquainted with facts..."<sup>2</sup> Clearly the Madras Council's accusation of the Nawwāb's "violence and cruelties" was based on an inadequate information and was rather intended as a pretext for their aggressive expedition.

Clive arrived at Falta on 15 December 1756 and on that very day he wrote a letter to Mānik Chānd thanking him for the "great

<sup>1</sup> *Hill*, I, 243.

<sup>2</sup> General letter from Fort St. George Council to England, 13 October, 1756, *B.M.P.*, II.

friendship and regard" he had shown for the Company. Clive also asked Mānik Chānd, since he had "hitherto professed a desire to serve the Company", to "retain the same disposition in their favour" when "their affairs most" needed it.<sup>1</sup> Mānik Chānd's reply to this letter was extremely reciprocal. He expressed his sincere "rejoice" to learn about Clive's "safe arrival in these parts" and informed him as follows:<sup>2</sup>

"The causes of the misfortunes which had befallen the Company's settlements you will learn from their former agents. My conduct in them you must have already known as well as my disposition for peace and quiet which I have solely in view. Your letter has determined me more than ever in the same sentiments, and in my desire of serving the Company which I shall continue to do to the utmost of my power. Radakissen Mullick, a man of trust whom I have sent to you, will impart you some further particulars which I recommend to your attentive consideration, & c.,..."

What "further particulars" were conveyed to Clive through Radakissen Mullick (Rādhākṛishna Mallik) are not on record. Obviously they were of such a nature as were not thought proper to be written lest they should fall into wrong hands. More significantly, Mānik Chānd, Sirāj al-Daulah's governor of Calcutta, on whom he naturally depended much for his dealings with the English, had already been in secret correspondence with the latter and was now "rejoiced" to learn about the arrival of English military reinforcements under Clive and was now all the more determined in his "desire of serving the Company" to the utmost of his power. Clive could not have imagined a better ally. He acknowledged receipt of the information transmitted through Rādhākṛishna Mallik and sent to Mānik Chānd, by the hand of the same person, Governor Pigot's letter to Sirāj al-Daulah, and another letter addressed to him by Nawwāb Salabat Jung of the Deccan, with a covering note in which Clive added: "After reading these letters it will be the Nawwāb's fault if the troubles in this country should begin again, and be worse than ever."<sup>3</sup>

As noted above, Pigot's letter contained clear threats of war. Mānik Chānd, who had hitherto been representing to the

<sup>1</sup> Clive to Rāja Mānik Chānd, 15 December 1756, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Mānik Chānd to Clive, 19 December 1756, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Clive to Mānik Chānd, 21 December 1756, *ibid.*

Nawwāb that the English had no warlike intentions, now naturally found it embarrassing to forward such a strongly worded letter to him. In his predicament Mānik Chānd requested Clive, in a letter of 23 December 1756, to make certain modifications in the letter and then to return it to him for onward transmission to the Nawwāb.<sup>1</sup> Clive curtly declined to do so adding:<sup>2</sup>

"We were come to demand satisfaction for the injuries done us by the Nabob, not to entreat his favour, and with a force which we think sufficient to vindicate our claim."

### III: THE ENGLISH OFFENSIVE AND THE FALL OF SIRĀJ AL-DAULAH

Clive did not in fact bother whether his letter was delivered to the Nawwāb. The same day (25 December) on which he had written the above noted communication he also decided to commence hostilities.<sup>3</sup> The sequence of his offensive operations was as follows. On 29 December the English fleet proceeded up the river and on the following day Budge Budge was taken. On 31 December the Thana fort was captured and on 1 January 1757 the Fort William in Calcutta was recaptured. Mānik Chānd, who had been secretly professing friendship for the English and had been well aware of their hostile intentions, did neither inform the Nawwāb about these nor make any attempt to defend the places retaken by the English, although he had sufficient forces at his disposal. After the recapture of the Fort William Clive made preparations for an attack upon Hugli, and on 8 January wrote a letter to Mānik Chānd, who had withdrawn to that place, asking him to continue his friendship as he had so long been doing.<sup>4</sup> The same day Clive wrote letters also to Jagat Śeth and Khwāja Wājīd asking them to "prevail upon the Nabob to give us [English] satisfaction for our losses," and coupled this request with the threat: "You must have heard that we have shown no want of courage on the Coromondal Coast, and we have much stronger reasons to exert ourselves upon this occasion..."<sup>5</sup> Clive did not

<sup>1</sup> Mānik Chānd to Clive, 23 December 1756, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Clive to Mānik Chānd, 25 December 1756, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Clive to Kalpatrick, 25 December 1756, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Clive to Mānik Chānd, 8 January 1757, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Clive to Jagat Śeth and Khwāja Wājīd, 8 January 1757, *ibid.*

however give these gentlemen any time for reply; and only two days afterwards, on 10 January, he stormed and occupied Hugli. The whole town was plundered and "burnt to ashes" with a view, as Drake and Beecher wrote, to striking a "terror in the Subah's Troops & encourage any malcontents to declare in our favour."<sup>1</sup> Mānik Chānd, as usual, did not offer any resistance. A perusal of the extant records as well as his correspondence with the English makes it clear that he collusively encouraged and helped the latter in their rather incredibly easy and swift recapture of Budge Budge, Thana, Calcutta and Hugli. It was only after the pillage of Hugli that he wrote to the Nawwāb saying that the English he had now to deal with were very much different from those whom he defeated in June last.

As soon as the news of the recapture of Calcutta and the destruction of Hugli by the English reached Murshidabad, Sirāj al-Daulah marched down with a large army and arrived on the outskirts of Hugli on 20 January (1757). On his approach the English withdrew from that place and entrenched themselves at the Fort William. Before marching upon Calcutta, and consistently with his letter to George Pigot, the Nawwāb wrote a letter to Admiral Waston, on 23 January, expressing his willingness to allow the English to resettle themselves in Bengal provided, instead of Roger Drake, a new chief was appointed for them.<sup>2</sup> Sirāj al-Daulah repeated the same intention on 24 and 30 January and asked Clive to send a "trusty person" for negotiations.<sup>3</sup> These letters produced some sobering effect upon Clive who, also with a view to keeping Sirāj al-Daulah away from the Fort William, now showed an inclination to negotiate with the Nawwāb.<sup>4</sup> The latter entered Calcutta on 3 February. On the following day Clive and Waston sent two persons, Scrafton and Walsh, to the Nawwāb's camp for negotiations. These two persons unreasonably suspected that Sirāj al-Daulah would confine them and would make a surprise attack upon Fort William in the following morning. They

<sup>1</sup> Drake and Beecher to the Secret Committee for the Affairs of the Company, 26 January 1757, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Hill*, II, 130-131.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 133, 184.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 183, 208.

therefore escaped from the Nawwāb's camp at night and informed Clive about their mistaken impressions. Their suspicion was however baseless, for there is nothing on record to indicate that Sirāj al-Daulah had any such intention to detain the English emissaries. Such a supposition also runs counter to his repeated offers for a negotiated settlement. Moreover, if he intended to attack the English by surprise, the detention of their emissaries would have only defeated his purpose by putting them on the alert; for if Scrafton and Walsh were scheduled to return to Fort William before the following morning, their failure to do so would have naturally given rise to misgivings there. If, on the other hand, they were to stay in the Nawwāb's camp for the night, there was no point in putting them under detention. That Sirāj al-Daulah had no such intention is clear from the fact that he was taken aback when Clive, acting on the information of Scrafton and Walsh, suddenly attacked the Nawwāb's camp on the morning of 5 February.<sup>1</sup> Even after this provocation Sirāj al-Daulah did not break negotiations. Ultimately on 9 February 1757 an agreement was reached between the two parties. By this Treaty of 'Alīnagar, as it is called, the Nawwāb agreed to allow the English to obtain possession of the villages promised in the *farmān* of 1717, to free their goods from all kinds of duties, and to permit them to fortify Calcutta and to establish a mint there.<sup>2</sup>

The treaty of 'Alīnagar thus secured to the English all the commercial and military advantages they asked for. Sirāj al-Daulah concluded this rather humiliating treaty in view of the rumoured invasion of Ahmad Shāh 'Abdālī from the north-west and also, presumably, in view of the treacherous conduct of his own officials like Mānik Chānd. The Nawwāb must have realized that while Mānik Chānd and his sort continued to help the English secretly it would not be possible for him to dictate his terms to the English. Clive, on his part, considered it prudent at that time to suspend hostilities because of the arrival of the news of the Seven Years' War and the outbreak of hostilities with the French. He feared that he might be recalled to Madras and that if

<sup>1</sup> Hill, III, 38, 39, 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 215-17.

he did not conclude a treaty with the Nawwāb there might be an alliance between him and the French, creating a highly critical situation for the English in Bengal.

From Clive's point of view the treaty of 9 February was merely a temporary expedient. He knew quite well that in order to capture political power in Bengal it was necessary to overthrow Sirāj al-Daulah as well as to oust the French. He had taken positive steps to accomplish the first objective; but the arrival of the news of war with the French necessitated this modification in his plan that he had now to direct his immediate attention to the accomplishment of the second objective, that of ousting the French. In fact immediately after the conclusion of the treaty of 9 February Clive decided to attack the French settlement at Chandernagar. As a preliminary step he sent Watts and Umichānd to Sirāj al-Daulah's court asking his support for, or connivance at, the proposed attack on Chandernagar.<sup>1</sup> This was a dexterous move on Clive's part which placed the Nawwāb in a predicament. If he agreed to the English proposal he would be himself violating neutrality in his dominions and would be accused of having sided with the English in their war against the French. If, on the other hand, he disagreed, he could be accused of being unfriendly towards the English, or, even of being secretly in alliance with the French. As would be seen presently, before long Clive began to bring forth both the latter allegations against the Nawwāb.

Sirāj al-Daulah rightly declined to accede to Clive's proposal and, in the few weeks that followed, made earnest endeavours to enforce neutrality within his dominions.<sup>2</sup> When all his peaceful attempts failed he decided, in a desperate mood, to deploy his army to maintain neutrality. For this purpose he asked his general Nanda Kumār "to assist the French with all his force, in case the English should attack Chandernagar, or if the French should attack the English, to assist them in the same manner, that there may be no quarrels or disputes in this country."<sup>3</sup> The English, however, bought over Nanda Kumār for a sum of ten or twelve

<sup>1</sup> Extract of a letter from Clive to the Nawwāb, 22 February 1757, *Hill*, II., 236.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, 229-230, 231, 236, 240, 245-46, 264, 268-69.

<sup>3</sup> Watts to Clive, 18 February 1757, *ibid.*, 228; also Clive to Secret Committee of the Company, 22 February 1757, *ibid.*, 240.



thousand rupees<sup>1</sup> and thus succeeded in frustrating the Nawwāb's plan. They also bribed his secretary and chief of the intelligence service, and thus succeeded in even intercepting his confidential communications.<sup>2</sup> Indeed Clive with the help of Mānik Chand and the Jagat Śeth so extensively spread the web of bribery and treachery that it became extremely difficult for Sirāj al-Daulah to pursue a vigorous policy. The Jagat Śeth group exercised their influence in all possible ways and did everything in their power to prevent the Nawwāb from adopting a strong line of action against the English. Whenever he contemplated to do so, these nobles pleaded that "it was the part of prudence not to irritate" the English.<sup>3</sup> At the same time Sirāj al-Daulah was perturbed just at this juncture by the reported advance of Ahmad Shāh 'Abdālī towards the Bihar frontier. The Śeth and Bāniā group played upon this 'Abdālī menace to divert the Nawwāb's attention from the English. So successfully did they do so that Sirāj al-Daulah not only deployed his best contingents of the army on the Bihar frontier, which naturally weakened his position vis-a-vis the English, but even sought the latter's cooperation in warding off the threatened 'Abdālī invasion.<sup>4</sup> This predicament of the Nawwāb only facilitated Clive's designs.

At this stage, on 5 March, a fresh contingent of troops arrived as reinforcements for Clive by the ship *Cumberland*.<sup>5</sup> These reinforcements removed all hesitation on the part of Clive. On 8 March he began his march towards Chandernagar and laid siege to it on the 14th. Sirāj al-Daulah sent an army under Rāi Durlabh Rām and Mīr Madan to prevent any attack upon the French, but before their arrival Clive succeeded in forcing the French to surrender Chandernagar and to sign a capitulation agreeing to leave that place and also to place all their factories in Bengal at the disposal of Admiral Wastōn and the Nawwāb.<sup>6</sup>

After having captured Chandernagar Clive perempotrily

<sup>1</sup> Watts to Clive, 18 February 1757, *op.cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Law's memoir, *Hill*, III, 191n.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-99.

<sup>4</sup> Sirāj al-Daulah to Watson, *Hill*, II, 241.

<sup>5</sup> Orme, *Military Transactions*, II, 142-43; also Law's memoir, *op.cit.*, 271.

<sup>6</sup> *Hill*, II, 292-293.

demanding Sirāj al-Daulah's "strict alliance" in expelling the French "root and branch" from Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The Nawwāb, being then constantly haunted by the 'Abdālī menace, sought to appease the English by dismissing from his court Jean Law, the French representative. This did not however satisfy Clive who now asked Sirāj al-Daulah's permission, on 20 April, for the passage of two thousand of the Company's troops by land to Patna in order to pursue and capture Law and the other Frenchmen who had withdrawn to that place.<sup>2</sup> This Sirāj al-Daulah refused to do. Hence Clive began to accuse him of complicity with the French. In fact Clive was now determined to replace Sirāj al-Daulah by a nominee of the English on the *masnad* of Bengal. On 23 April 1757, that is only three days afterwards, the Select Committee of the Fort William Council officially adopted the resolution to overthrow Sirāj al-Daulah.<sup>3</sup> As a pretext for their decision they also began to accuse the Nawwāb of his failure to carry out the provisions of the treaty of 9 February, although a month earlier, on 29 March, Clive himself had written to his superiors at Madras saying that the Nawwāb had "already performed almost every article of the treaty; paid Mr. Watts the three lakhs of rupees; delivered up Kasimbazar, and all the factories, with the money and goods therein taken."<sup>4</sup> The Nawwāb had also previously given orders for the restoration to the Company of the 38 villages near Calcutta and for allowing them to coin money at the Fort William.<sup>5</sup>

Simultaneously with making these baseless allegations against the Nawwāb, Clive entered into a conspiracy with the Śeth brothers, Rāi Durlabh Rām and Umichānd, to oust Sirāj al-Daulah. At the suggestion of the Śeth brothers Mīr Ja'far, the Nawwāb's *bakhshi* (Paymaster of the army) was tipped for the nawwābship. The latter, along with his two supporters, Mirzā Amīr Beg and Khādim Husain Khān, undertook to back the

<sup>1</sup> Clive to Pigot and to Sirāj al-Daulah, 29 March 1757, *ibid.*, 303-304.

<sup>2</sup> Watson to Sirāj al-Daulah, 19 April 1757, and Clive to Sirāj al-Daulah, 20 April 1757, *ibid.*, 345, 348-349.

<sup>3</sup> *Hill*, II, 368.

<sup>4</sup> Clive to Pigot, 29 March 1757, *ibid.*, 303.

<sup>5</sup> Watts to Fort William Select Committee, 10 March 1757, *ibid.*, 278.

proposed *coup d'état* with the troops under their command. The terms of agreement between Mīr Ja'far and the English were formulated and finalized between 1 May and 3 June 1757. Some difficulty was caused at the last stage by the attitude of Umichānd who demanded, under threat of divulging the plot to Sirāj al-Daulah, a five per cent commission on all the Nawwāb's treasures. Clive felt no scruple to pay the treacherer in his own coin and had a fake copy of the agreement between the two parties prepared, containing a promise of a reward of 20,000 rupees to Umichānd, on which Clive himself forged Watson's signature. According to the real agreement Mīr Ja'far undertook to secure to the Company not only the advantages laid down in the treaty of 9 February, but also, *inter alia*, to pay the Company an indemnity of 100 lakhs of rupees, 50 lakhs of rupees to the Europeans, 20 lakhs to the Hindu nobles and 7 lakhs to the Armenians for their alleged losses on account of Sirāj al-Daulah's capture of Calcutta in the previous year. Mīr Ja'far further agreed to put Calcutta and the whole country lying to its south "under the perpetual government of the English." Further, he undertook to "enter into an alliance with the English offensive and defensive against all enemies whatever, either country powers or Europeans", and to pay the expenses of the Company's army whenever its assistance was taken by the Nawwāb.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime Sirāj al-Daulah was somewhat relieved by the news of 'Abdālī's departure from India and ordered Mīr Ja'far to proceed with an army towards Plassey in order to resist the English if they attempted to March northward for haunting down the French. As the secret negotiations with the Śeths and Mīr Ja'far had then been in progress and had not yet been completed, Clive thought it prudent to allay any suspicion on Sirāj al-Daulah's part by withdrawing the English troops from Chandernagar.<sup>2</sup> Mīr Ja'far, on the other hand, promised a further reward of 52 lakhs of rupees to Clive and his colleagues in order to hasten the *coup d'état*. The final agreement, after being signed and sealed by Mīr Ja'far, was handed over to Clive on 10 June 1757.

<sup>1</sup> Hill, II, 383-385.

<sup>2</sup> Clive to Sirāj al-Daulah, 2 May 1757, *ibid.*, 372.

Three days afterwards (13 June) Clive sent an ultimatum to Sirāj al-Dulāh alleging that he had failed to carry out his treaty obligations and demanding that Mīr Ja'far, Jagat Śeth, Rāi Durlabh Rām, Mīr Madan and Mohan Lāl be asked to judge whether he (the Nawwāb) had been true to his treaty obligations.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Clive ordered his army to proceed towards Murshidabad. The Nawwāb marched out to Plassey to meet Clive. There, on 23 June 1757, the latter won the battle not by bravery but through the treachery of Mīr Ja'far, Rāi Durlabh Rām and their partisans who did not even engage the troops under their command against the English. Sirāj al-Daulah escaped from the battle field and proceeded northward presumably with a view to effecting a junction with his troops stationed on the Bihar frontier. On his way, however, the ill-fated Nawwāb was captured by a partisan of Mīr Ja'far's and brought as a prisoner to Murshidabad. There, on 29 June Clive installed Mīr Ja'far as the new Nawwāb of Bengal, and 2 days afterwards, on 2 July, Sirāj al-Daulah was brutally murdered by Mīr Ja'far's son Miran, most probably at the instigation of Clive and Mīr Ja'far, both of whom were then present in the capital and were very much in control of affairs there, including the custody of the deposed Nawwāb.

#### IV: EPILOGUE

With the defeat and murder of Sirāj al-Daulah and the installation of the puppet Nawwāb Mīr Ja'far under Clive's superintendence English political authority was established in Bengal. It was the combined result of the gradual weakening and disintegration of the Mughal empire, the world-wide commercial and colonial rivalry among the European nations consequent upon the geographical discoveries of the previous centuries, the emergence of a wealthy and influential Hindu mercantile class in Bengal who had practically assumed the role of king-makers since the death of Murshid Qulī Khān in 1727, and the determination and enterprise of the English East India Company's agents for gaining commercial and colonial supremacy over the south-Asian subcontinent. Sirāj al-Daulah fell a victim to these circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Clive to Sirāj al-Daulah, 13 June 1757, *ibid.*, 405-407.

Ever since the battle of Plassey, however, he was been generally maligned and held responsible for his own fall. This is easily understandable; for the parties opposed to him remained in power for about two centuries after his fall, and directly and indirectly influenced judgements about him. More important still is the fact that we do not have any records from his side. All that is available is the records of his adversaries. The unavoidable dependence on this "source" has resulted in an almost uniformly unfavourable picture of the fallen Nawwāb.

In the main, the allegations against Sirāj al-Dāulah have for their source the minute of a meeting of the Fort William Select Committee held on 1 May 1757, i.e., just a week after they had officially adopted the resolution for ousting him. In the meeting of 1 May they rationalized their plot to overthrow Sirāj al-Daulah on the grounds that (a) he was dishonest and oppressive upon the English; (b) that he intrigued with the French which meant that he would break the treaty with the English "on the first occasion"; and (c) that he had grown unpopular with the "Bengali people" so that a revolution would have come in any case.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly these rationalizations are, by their very nature, self-exculpatory on the part of the English factors. Sirāj al-Daulah did not oppress the English merchants, nor did he plunder their wealth even after his seizure of the Kasimbazar factory. By Clive's and Watts' admissions it is proved that Sirāj al-Daulah made good all the losses sustained by the English factors in Bengal and carried out faithfully all the terms of the treaty of 9 February 1757. Moreover he had throughout his communications with the English authorities repeatedly stated that he had no intention to expel them from Bengal and that he was willing to reestablish them with all their former privileges if only they agreed not to abuse their trade privileges and violate the sovereignty of the Nawwāb. In fact it was the English traders who had far outstripped their trade privileges and, with the clear and calculated motive of establishing their political sway, had begun stealthily to fortify their settlements disregarding the Nawwāb's specific orders to desist from so doing, and had also defied him by

<sup>1</sup> Hill, II, 370-71.

giving shelter to the fugitives from justice. As noted above, their fortification work was not necessitated by the so-called "French peril." The object behind it was to bring about a "revolution" in Bengal for which purpose the English had also contemplated, even before Sirāj al-Daulah's accession, to effect a junction with any hostile section of the Nawwāb's subjects.

Similarly the allegation of Sirāj al-Daulah's intrigue with the French is also fallacious. What he really did was that he did not, contrary to Clive's desire, ally himself with the English against the French. True to his conception of an independent ruler he made earnest efforts to enforce neutrality within his dominions; but Clive, disregarding the Nawwāb's directives and taking advantage of his preoccupation with the 'Abdālī menace, aggressively attacked and captured the French settlement at Chandernagar. Under the circumstances Sirāj al-Daulah had to disgorge this violation of his territorial integrity, but he refused to allow the English to haunt down the French. It was in consequence of Clive's aggressive proceedings that the Nawwāb appears to have at that time written to Bussy, the French general in south India, to come to the rescue of the French in Bengal. This letter was intercepted by the English and was subsequently cited as proof of Sirāj al-Daulah's intrigue with the French. Even if this letter is regarded as genuine, it is clear that the Nawwāb's action was an aftermath of Clive's violation of neutrality within the Nawwāb's dominions. By starting hostilities against the French the English had in effect declared war upon the Nawwāb and the latter was legally and morally justified in taking steps to protect the French within his dominions as well as his sovereignty. Nor could it be argued that if the English had not forestalled the French, the latter would have attacked the English and that the Nawwāb would have been unable to prevent it. The French in Bengal were very weak and there is nothing on record to show that they contemplated or made an effort to move against the English in Bengal. The paradox in the English factors' allegation can be easily seen if it is noted that they, after having already violated neutrality and their own engagements with the Nawwāb, and also after having taken steps to overthrow him, attempted to justify

their actions by assuring their conscience that Sirāj al-Daulah would break his treaty with the English "on the first occasion". Clearly, he had not yet broken the treaty with the English, whereas the latter had already done so.

Similarly, the alleged unpopularity of Sirāj al-Daulah with the "Bengali people" really refers to the attitude of the Jagat Śeth-Umichānd group who, since Murshid Qulī Khān's time, had come to occupy all the important posts in the state. It is noteworthy that Sirāj al-Daulah had to depend on Mānik Chānd for the administration of Calcutta and the conduct of affairs with the English merchants, upon Rājā Rāmnārāyān for guarding the Bihar frontier against the threatened invasion of Ahmad Shāh 'Abdālī, upon Nanda Kumār, Rāi Durlabh Rām and Mīr Madan for enforcing neutrality within his dominions and for restraining the English from attacking the French, and upon Rājā Rāj Ballabh for the revenue administration of the eastern districts. Obviously it was difficult, or even impossible for Sirāj al-Daulah to succeed without the cooperation of this group of the people. There is nothing on record to show that he did anything to alienate them; but for commercial and political reasons indicated earlier they were inclined towards an alliance with the English. In fact this alliance of them with the English was the most important factor in Sirāj al-Daulah's fall. The promptness with which he had at the beginning of his reign dealt with Ghaseti Begam and Shawkat Jang proves that Sirāj al-Daulah did not lack courage and resolution, as it has sometimes been suggested. His subsequent vacillation and apparent weakness in dealing with the English can be explained only against the background of the insincerity and conspiracy of his officials like Mānik Chānd and the influential section of the nobility led by Jagat Śeth and Durlabh Rām. Thus Sirāj's failure to prevent the English from recapturing Calcutta was due mainly to the complicity of Mānik Chānd who concealed their real intention and military preparations from the view of the Nawwāb, secretly professed his (Mānik Chānd's) desire to serve them, encouraged and helped them to recapture Budge Budge, Thana and Calcutta. Similarly, on the eve of Clive's attack on Chandernagar the Nawwāb was determined to resist him; but

Nanda Kumār, who was entrusted with the task, betrayed and joined hands with the English on receiving a handsome amount as bribe. Similarly Jagat Śeth, Umichānd and Rāi Durlabh Rām did their best at court to prevent Sirāj al-Daulah from adopting a strong policy against the English. In fact within six months of his accession to the throne, the conspiracy against Sirāj al-Daulah was already in embryo. With the assistance of these persons Clive easily succeeded in almost paralyzing the administration and in tapping and intercepting even the confidential correspondence of the Nawwāb. Sirāj al-Daulah had indeed come to know of the conspiracy against him, but the web of treachery and treason was now so widespread that he could not take action against anybody because he could trust nobody. His awareness of the situation as well as his helplessness is best revealed by the frantic appeals he made about that time to his nobles, including Mīr Ja'far, to save the country from passing under foreign administration. They promised their help only to betray him in the hour of need.

Mīr Ja'far's role was no less ignominious than that of Jagat Śeth and the others of his group. The only difference was perhaps that Mīr Ja'far represented the degenerate section of the once powerful Muslim nobility who had been gradually pushed into the background since Murshid Qulī Khān's time. It may be noted that the absence of a countervailing strong Muslim nobility left the field practically open for the rising mercantile group of the Hindus. In view of the fact that both 'Alivardī Khān and his predecessor Shujā'al-Dīn Khān had obtained the *masnad* of Bengal with their support, Mīr Ja'far's alliance with them would not perhaps appear unusual. What was peculiar in the situation was the intervention of the English in the struggle for the throne. This intervention was as much the result of their imperial and colonial ambitions as that of the encouragement and assistance of the Jagat Śeth-Mānik Chānd group. As later events proved, their attachment to the English was more real than their support for Mīr Ja'far. There is no reason to suppose that if Mīr Ja'far had not joined the conspiracy, or even if he had been dismissed and arrested by Sirāj al-Daulah, the situation would have improved for the latter. The determined and enterprising English adventur-



ers, allied with the mercantile faction, would not have stopped their machinations till they had succeeded in bringing about Sirāj al-Daulah's fall and in placing one of their puppets on the throne. That neither the English company nor the Jagat Śeth-Mānik Chānd group wanted merely to replace an allegedly "oppressive" and "unjust" ruler by a just one became clearer in the years that immediately followed the battle of Plassey. Mīr Ja'far, their own nominee, soon found it impossible to pull on with their demands and importunities and had to vacate the throne. Their next choice, Mīr Qāsim, equally failed to satisfy them, although by all accounts he made earnest efforts to improve the country's administration and economy. His attempts at justice and efficiency brought for him deposition, defeat and disappearance from the arena of history. There is nothing in the contemporary records to show that the Jagat Śeth-Nanda Kumār-Mānik Chānd entente, who had been mainly instrumental in bringing about Sirāj's fall, did anything subsequently to prevent the country from passing effectively under the control of the foreigners. On the contrary, their support and cooperation accounts for the easy success of the English in Bengal. "Bengali dissensions", rightly observes Spear, "had avoided the necessity of proving European military superiority by hard fighting as in the south."<sup>1</sup>

As for Sirāj al-Daulah it was no fault of his own that he was nominated for the throne by 'Alivardī Khān and found himself as a result confronted with the rivalry and enmity of some of his kinsmen. During the fourteen months of his reign he tried to maintain his position against their hostilities and, as it appears, he would have ultimately succeeded but for the betrayal of some of the "Bengali people" who preferred calling in the foreigners to putting up with his rule. Under the circumstances, Sirāj al-Daulah tried to be just to both the English and the French companies, to himself, and to his country. He failed not because of his personal drawbacks and inefficiency, but because of the crisis of character of his people and because the circumstances of the time were against him. He failed because his own men betrayed him, because the influential "Bengalis" preferred their own selfish

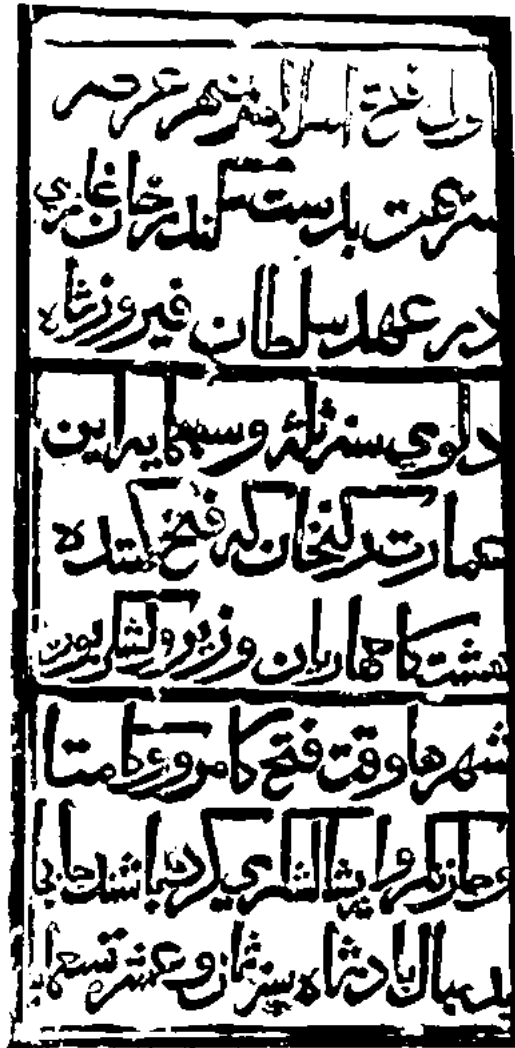
<sup>1</sup> *The Oxford History of India*, Third edition, 1961, 469.

interests to those of the country, because the once great Mughal imperial fabric, of which Bengal was a part, disintegrated and fell, and, in its stead, neither Bengal nor indeed any other province had still developed sufficient strength, particularly naval strength, to withstand the increasing onslaughts of the European nations; and, finally, because the latter, consequent upon the geographical discoveries of the previous centuries, had just at that juncture of time embarked upon a career of worldwide expansion and colonial domination. Sirāj al-Daulah's fall heralded and typified the fall of the East to the West, of Asia to Europe. His struggle and fall represents the natural but unsuccessful resistance of the East to Western intrusion and domination. He did not succeed; but he did not fail the land. It is the land that failed him. As an English authority remarks: "Whatever may have been his faults Shirajuddaulah had neither betrayed his master nor sold his country... He was the only one of the principal actors in that tragic drama who did not attempt to deceive."<sup>1</sup>

It goes to the credit of the English that they succeeded. Their allegations and charges against the Nawwāb were more or less a part of their diplomatic and political offensive against him. These should not therefore form the basis of judgement about him. Also, keeping in view the wellknown adage that nothing is wrong in love and war the duplicity and deceit resorted to by some of the English agents may be overlooked. The success of the English was not merely a success against a local ruler, it was a success against their international rival, the French. The fall of Sirāj al-Daulah marked the beginning of British rule over Bengal which lasted for about two centuries. It was from the position of strength acquired in Bengal that the British gradually extended their sway over the other parts of the subcontinent. The preservation of the "Indian empire" from the aggressive designs of other European powers became in course of time an important factor in Britain's relations with those powers. It was also a major consideration behind British policies in the Middle East—Egypt, Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan — throughout the

<sup>1</sup> Col. G.B. Malleson, *The Decisive Battles of India, from 1746 to 1849 inclusive*, London, 1885, p.71.

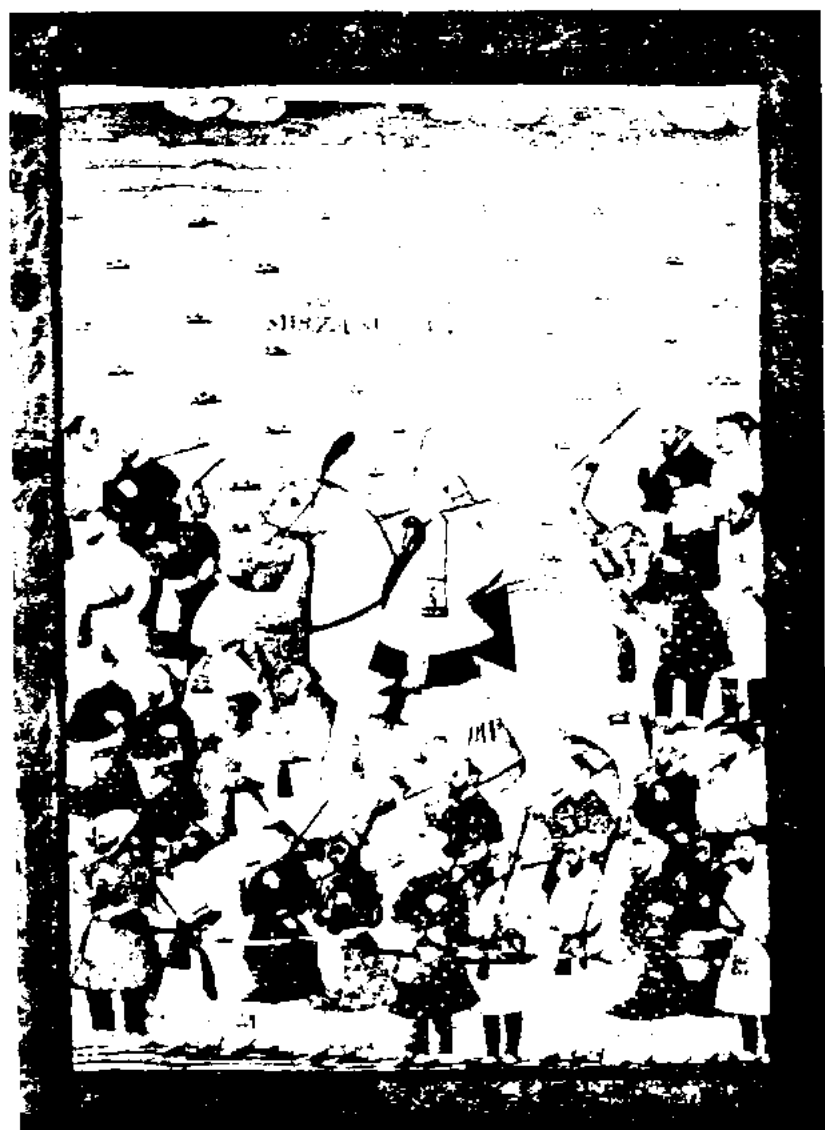
nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. In this context the fall of Sirāj al-Daulah and the end of Muslim rule in Bengal marked the beginning of a new phase of world developments and international history.



Inscription of 'Alā' al-Dīn Husain Shāh's reign showing the conquest of Sylhet during Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh's reign in 703 H. (1303 A.C.). (Reproduced from M.A.A.T.P., Pl. 81b).

Translation: (*Top indistinct*): In honor of the exalted Shaikh al-Mashākh, the revered Shaikh Jādī Mujaḥḥad ibn Muḥammad. (First panel) The first conquest of Islam of the town of 'Arsah Sirhat' was at the of Sikandar Khān Ghāzī in the reign of Sulṭān Firūz Shāh (Second panel) Delhi in the year seven hundred and three. (703/1303) .....

(To face p. 110)



Mir Jomla

From a portrait presented in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Cabinet des Estampes, O.D. No. 45, reserve). Reproduced by kind permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

(To face p. 104)

PLATE III.



Shā'sra Khān

From a portrait reproduced in Bradley-Birt, *The Romance of an Eastern Capital*, London, 1906, facing p 126.



Shajā' Al-Dīn Muhammad Khān

From a portrait in the Murshidābād Palace Library reproduced in J.H.T. Walsh, *The History of Murshidābād District*, London, 1902.

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PLATE VI.



Sarfarāz Khān

From a portrait in the Murshidabad Palace Library reproduced in J.H.T. Walsh, *A History of Murshidabad District*, London, 1902.

(To face p. 590.)



PLATE VII.



Aliyardi Khan

From a portrait in the Marshfield Palace Library reproduced in J.H.T. Walsh, *A History of Marshfield District*, London, 1902.

(Pl. Cxx, p. 008)

PLATE VIII.



Siraj al-Daulah

From a portrait in the Murshidabad Palace Library reproduced in J.H.T. Walsh, *A History of Murshidabad District*, London, 1902.

(To face p. 676)



Mir Muhammad Ja'far and his Son Miran  
From a portrait in the Murshidabad Palace Library reproduced in J.E.T. Walsh, *A History of Murshidabad District*, London, 1902.

to face p. 677

# تاريخ المسلمين في البنغال

المجلد الأول (١)  
حكم المسلمين في البنغال  
٦٠٠ - ١١٧٠ هـ / ١٢٠٣ - ١٧٥٧ م

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المؤسسة الإسلامية بنغلاديش  
قسم للنشر و للطباعة

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